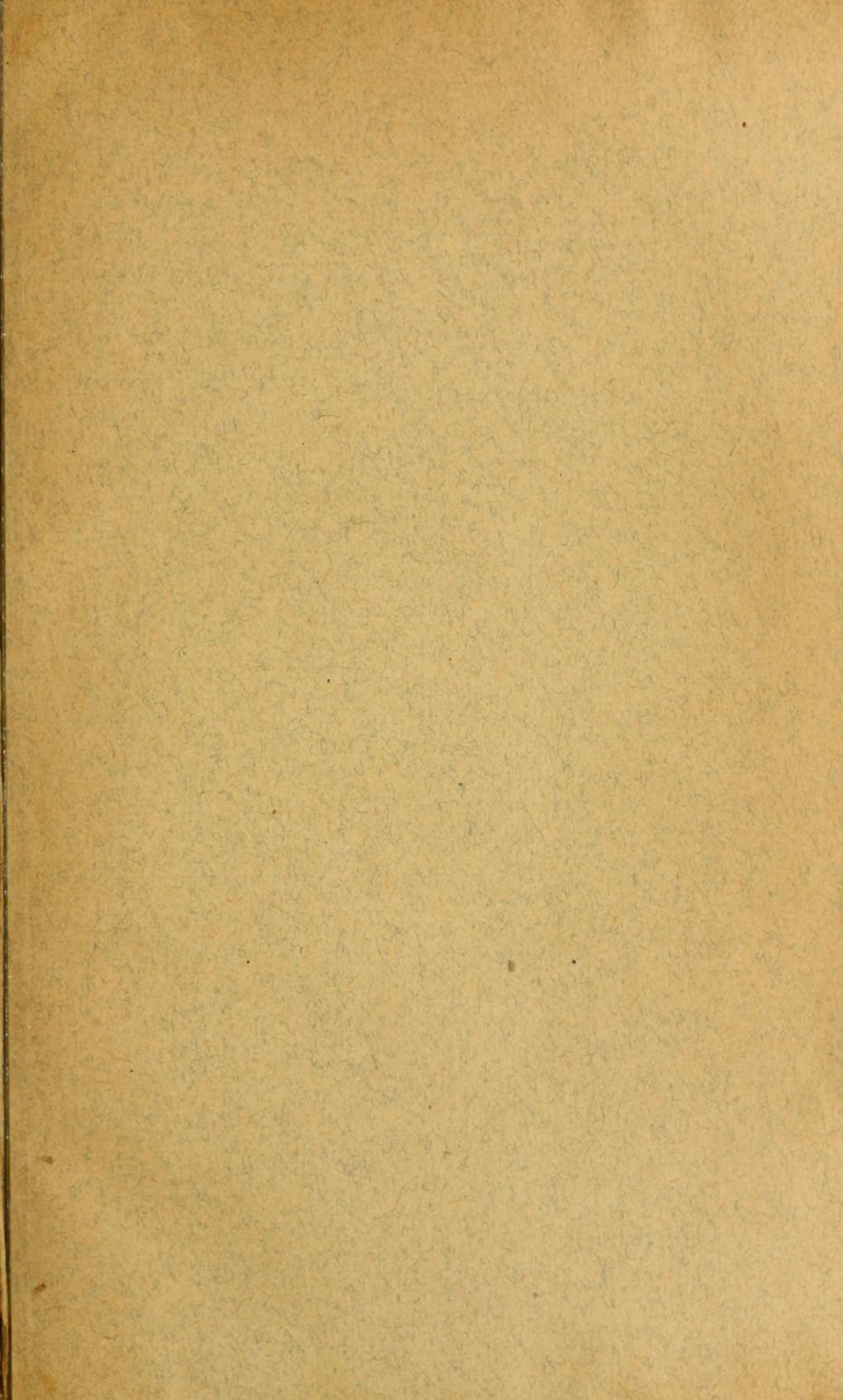


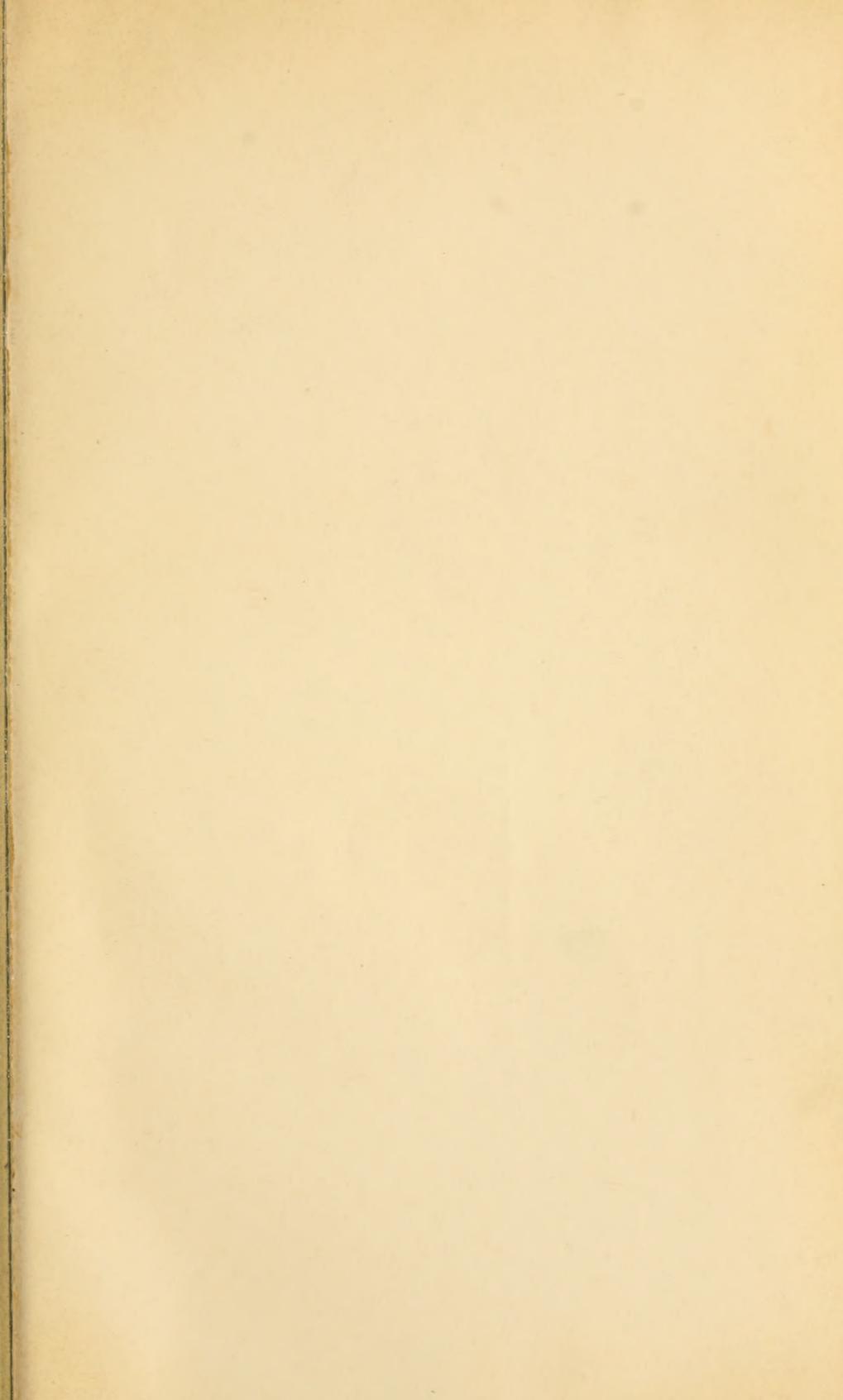


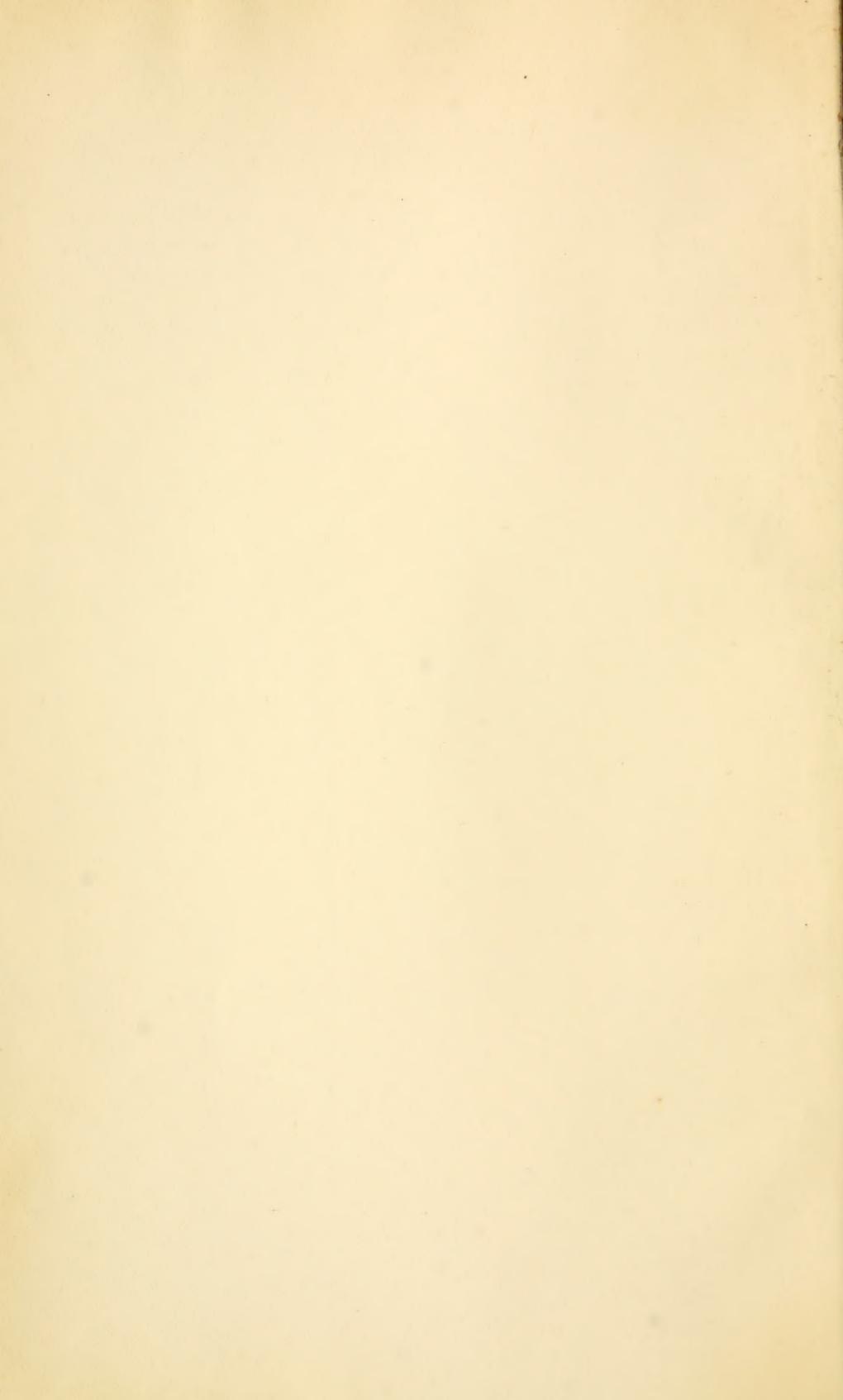


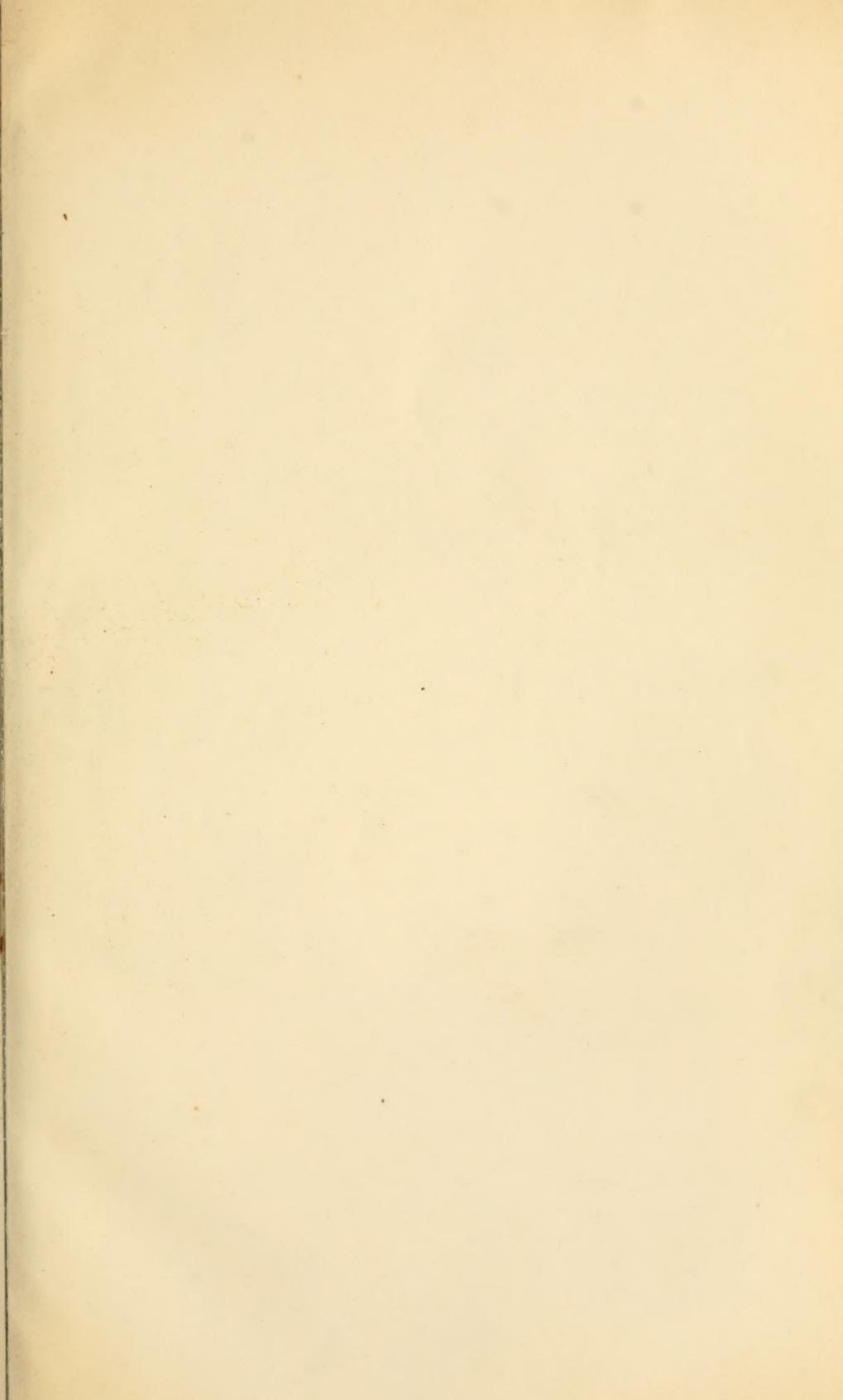
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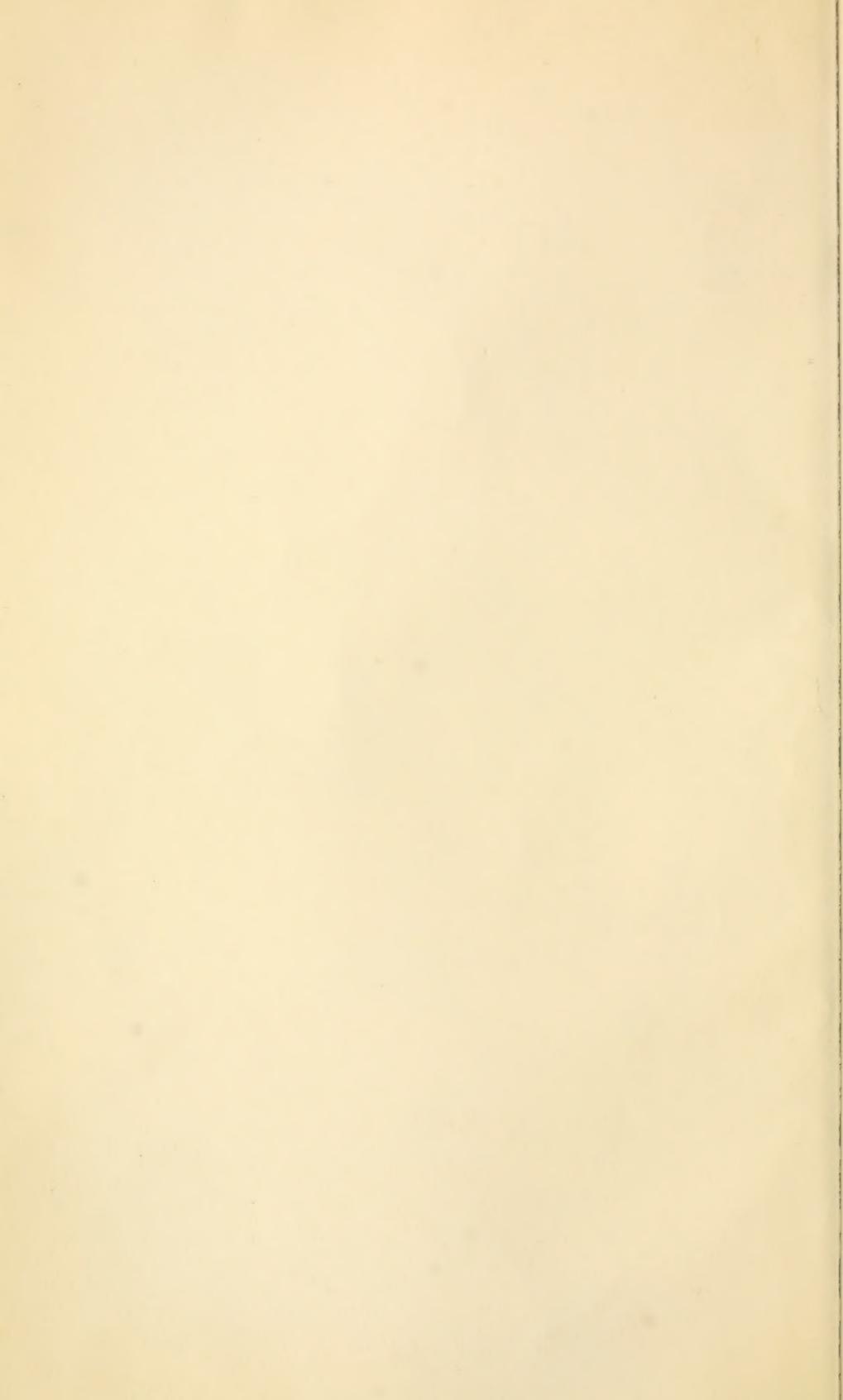












THE

# BRITISH PULPIT:

A COLLECTION OF

## SERMONS

BY

THE MOST EMINENT DIVINES

OF THE PRESENT DAY.

IN SIX VOLUMES.

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VOL. IV.

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# THE BRITISH PULPIT.

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GOD IN COVENANT WITH HIS PEOPLE.

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REV. J. HAMBLETON, A.M.

CHAPEL OF EASE, HOLLOWAY, TRINITY SUNDAY, 1835

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“For this God is our God for ever and ever : he will be our guide even unto death.”  
PSALM, xlviij. 14.

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We thank God to-day for “giving us grace to make confession of a true faith.” In that faith we acknowledge the glory of the Eternal Trinity, the Triune Jehovah, three persons and one God. In the same faith we pray to be kept “steadfast,” looking to this Triune God to “defend us evermore from all the adversities” to which the profession of our faith may expose us.

Now, Is this a Scriptural faith? is a most important question. Are we worshipping the true God, or, like the Athenians of old, have we raised an altar “to the unknown God?” These questions I propose that we consider in a very practical way.

Our text shall lead our thoughts. “This God is our God for ever and ever.” Who is this God? How is he our portion? Then, secondly, what may we consistently expect from him? “This is our God: he will be our guide even unto death.” These are our two points: in considering which, may our God aid us with his effectual blessing.

We will consider: first, WHO IS THIS GOD WHOM WE CALL OUR GOD.

There is great emphasis in the expression: “For this God is our God;” as if pointing to the true God in distinction from all false gods. We may partly gather from the Psalm itself, who is this God. This God is he, who (in the first verse of the Psalm) is called Jehovah, “the Lord, great and greatly to be praised in the city of our God.” This is “the great King,” (as the second verse calls him,) who chose Zion of old as the site of his favoured city. This God is he who was once “known in her palaces” as a sure refuge. This God

scattered kings in her behalf, " broke the ships of Tarshish with an east wind." This God is he whose loving-kindness made him delightfully thought of in his temple; whose " praise is unto the ends of the earth;" whose " right hand is full of righteousness." This God is our God whose " judgments make Zion to rejoice, and the daughters of Judah to be glad." " Walk about Zion," cries the Psalmist, " go round about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following. For this God is our God for ever and ever."

Hence it is evident, that "this God, our God," is God in covenant with his people. The whole Psalm throughout, relates to a God in covenant. This expression admits of only a two-fold interpretation: one literal—the God in covenant with the Jewish church; the second prophetical, or figurative, applying to God in covenant with the Church of Christ. Both these interpretations may be comprehended in one, by explaining our text as speaking of God in covenant with his people. "This God"—the believing Jew of old, and the believing Christian now, may alike say—"This God is our God for ever and ever."

God in covenant with his people (for we have already arrived at that, as the meaning of our text)—God in covenant with his people is, we believe, from Scripture, the triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. The unity of the Godhead is beyond dispute. " Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord," is the language of the Old Testament: " There is none other God but one," is the language of the New Testament. They who assume to themselves the name of Unitarians, more than insinuate that we deny or disbelieve the unity of God. But what is the first sentence of the first article of our religion? " There is but one living and true God." What is the second, the next sentence, which acknowledges the Trinity, as if to prevent that very insinuation? " And in unity of this Godhead there are three persons." For what is our creed? " I believe in one God." " The Catholic faith is this, that we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in unity." Hence we maintain, that the Socinians have no exclusive right whatever to the name of Unitarians; and it ought not to be conceded to them; as it seems to admit their unfair assumption, that *they* alone assert the unity of God. Let them know that this is no exclusive praise—nay, that it is no praise at all, unless they have right views of the one true God. The Jew admits the unity of God, while he denies Jesus to be the Messiah. Is he therefore right? The Mahomedan continually asserts, " There is one God," while he as often adds, " and Mahomet is his prophet." Is his faith correct? The Deist professes to believe in a God—usually I believe in one God—while he denies the truth of revelation. A man may, therefore, believe in the unity of God, and yet not believe aright.

God in covenant is, we believe, a triune God; " three persons in one God." We more than fear whether the Deist, the Mahomedan, the Jew, or the Socinian know God in covenant, the covenant-making and covenant-keeping God. The *Father* is the Author of this covenant. He foresaw that man would fall; he foreknew all the misery that would ensue: and, therefore, he himself, out of the abundance of his own loving-kindness and grace, made a provision of mercy, a covenant of grace, for the fallen and miserable. He gave his *Son*: he " so loved the world," says the Scripture, " that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever," of the guilty sons of men " believeth on him,

shall not perish." Accordingly Christ is called "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," according to the intention and will of his heavenly Father. "Blessed," cries the Apostle—"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy without blemish before him in love." So again, "It pleased the Father that in him (in Christ) should all fulness dwell." Thus the covenant of grace is traced up to the Father's free love, as its great originating cause: and *his* right to Deity is happily undisputed. Yet they who view him as God exclusively, and deny the right of Deity to his Son, and to the Holy Spirit, must take heed, lest they shut themselves out from that covenant of grace. If God would have all men to "honour the Son, even as they honour the Father"—for so the Scripture says—then he will not thank the man, who, affecting a jealousy for the Father's glory, while he professes to give to him the full honour of Deity, denies all such honour to his Son. Is this to "honour the Son even as we honour the Father?" The Father very and eternal God—the Son no God at all, a mere man! On the contrary, most of the Father's essential glory is to be acknowledged as the Father of such a Son; "by whom he made the worlds;" who is "the fellow of the Lord of Hosts"—"the brightness of his glory, the express image of his person." These terms suit not a mere man. To deny Deity to Christ, is to rob God the Father of his glory: it is to bar up from one's-self every door of access unto the Father's covenant of grace. For the Son of God is "the messenger of that covenant;" the "door of entrance," the "one Mediator between God and man." "He being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; yet he made himself of no reputation; took upon him the form of a servant; was made in the likeness of man; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

By this, his incarnation as man, he lost not his original dignity as God. It is a shame and a sin that this, his wondrous love, in becoming man, should sometimes be so ill-requited by the denial that he ever was God: whereas, in reality, his original dignity as God not only continued when he became man, but stamped its whole divine worth on the whole of his humiliation. Thus the very same verse of prophecy which announced his birth as an innocent child, asserted his glory as God: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call his name Immanuel"—which is, being interpreted, "God with us." So again, how close and remarkable this connexion between the weakness of childhood and the omnipotence of Deity: "Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God." Throughout his life, we see frequent proofs of Deity in personal union with humanity, with man's nature. One moment we behold him wearied and asleep as man; the next we hear him, in all the majesty of Deity, rebuking the winds and the waves. We see him surrounded, as any other man might be, with insidious foes; we perceive him knowing all their thoughts, as only God could know. Behold the *man* where he groans with sympathy, when he sees Martha and Mary weeping for their brother: behold the *God*, where he stands at the dead man's sepulchre, and like the Lord of death and Hades, cries, "Lazarus, come forth," and he that was dead came

forth. But, lo, *he dies!* Deity cannot die; and he is crucified through weakness. But, behold, at the same time the sun is shrouded in darkness, the veil of the temple is rent; the earth quakes; the rocks are rent; the graves are opened; even a heathen is reported to have exclaimed, "Either the God of nature is suffering, or the world's machinery is in the act of dissolution." Thus nature itself attested the intimate connexion—we believe, we might say, the mysterious union—between that crucified man and the ever-living God.

"And this God," we learn to say, as we gaze on his cross, "This God is our God." His sacrifice as man derives infinite worth from his Deity. There is an atonement equal to the claims of God upon us. Here is our reconciled Father's love flowing down to us in that stream of his incarnate Son's blood. This "blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth from all sin." This is our atonement; we put the hand of faith on this victim's head, and, confessing over him our sins, admit that we deserve to die that death; and declare that we know no name but his given among men, whereby we must be saved.

But, lo, he rises from the dead! This also is as man allied to Deity. In one place of Scripture, he is said to have been raised by the *Father*; in another to have been quickened by the *Spirit*; and in a third to have raised *himself*. But this required Deity. As soon might a stone, by its own inert force, raise itself from a cave and mount into the air, as a dead man could raise himself from the grave by any power of his own.

After a while he ascended into heaven; he sits at the right hand of God—the post of honour and of equality. He is said to send the Spirit whom the Father also sends; he has power given to him which only God could wield. He, like the Father, is the object of faith: in *his* name, equally with the Father's, we are baptized: he is worshipped in heaven by angels, and the spirits of the just made perfect; and on earth he has been worshipped by apostles, martyrs, and poor sinners, crying, "Lord, remember me!"

It is, my brethren, when we thus come to God as our Father, through Christ as our Mediator, that we say, with a meaning never known to us before, "This God is *our God*."

But *when* do we thus come? Not when, led only by the pride of reason, that stumbles at the very threshold, we say, "My sin is not so sinful: I need no such sacrifice: I can be my own saviour: I understand not that mystery: I refuse to be thus saved." Neither do we thus come at all till led, persuaded, drawn, by the *Holy Spirit*. He also, we believe, is God; not to the disparagement or exclusion of the Father and of the Son, but in union with them both, proceeding from them both; though distinct in person, yet one in essence; distinct in office, yet having that office as a necessary part of the covenant of grace. It is his to convince men of sin; to take of the things of Jesus, and shew them unto them: to bless the word of faith to the production of a true faith; by that faith to unite them to Jesus, and then to give them a peaceful knowledge of his forgiving mercy: to "shed abroad the love of God in his heart," as is said in one place; and to "constrain" by "the love of Christ," as is said in another: to make us "temples of God," as one Scripture declares—"temples of the Holy Ghost," as another Scripture responds: to cause men to be born of the Spirit," as one text asserts—"born of God," as another testifies. Thus there is the divine Spirit to apply the divine covenant; to enter the mind, the conscience, the heart of sinners: to bring you, who were

sinners, to Jesus as your Saviour, and through him to his Father as your Father, to his God as your God ; and enable you to say, " This God is our God."

Thus, my brethren, we have the doctrine of the Trinity in Unity before us in the simplest practical way. And you will find this doctrine always so proposed in holy Scripture ; nowhere in what may be called a scholastic or scientific manner. Nothing is said in Scripture to gratify curiosity or to nourish speculation ; but it is always there presented in close connexion with man's practical duties as a sinner, a penitent, a believer. Great injury has been done to the cause of truth by abstract speculation for and against this Scriptural doctrine. It ought always to be viewed in a practical way—in connexion with man's practical duties. " If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." " The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will shew them his covenant." " The secret things belong to the Lord our God ; but the things which are revealed belong to us and our children, to do them."

Now can my hearers all say, " God in covenant with his people—this God is *our* God ? Can they say individually, " this God is *my* God ?" Perhaps you say, " Yes ; we are his by baptism ; we remember that we were baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and that baptism is a covenant with God ; he engaging thereby to be our God—the Father to love, the Son to redeem, the Holy Spirit to sanctify—and we engaging to be his people."

This is a good account, and I am glad to find you well taught thus far : but we must come more closely still to the point. Have you *accepted* God to be your God—the Father to love, the Son to redeem, the Holy Ghost to sanctify ? and have you consented to be his people ? Has there been a covenant engagement made, as by your own act and deed ? or is the name of baptism to stand in the place of personal repentance and faith ? Is that the doctrine of our church, or of any sound church in the world ? Had not Simon Magnus been baptized ? And yet he had no part nor lot, an apostle told him, in the matter of salvation. Are there not, think you, among the lost, who once were among the baptized ?

My hearers, there must be a time in the life of every saved man, when he enters with intelligence and faith into the meaning of our text, " This God is our God." That time, with many first coming over from heathenism, is often closely connected with their baptism. With what joy may a converted heathen, casting away his idols to the moles and to the bats—coming to Christian baptism with a good understanding of its meaning, with a true faith in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost—say, " This God is our God. O Lord our God, other lords beside thee have had dominion over me ; but by thee henceforth will I make mention of thy name only."

In a Christian land like this, this period of personally covenanting with God is often closely connected with confirmation and the first coming to the Lord's supper. We therein receive the sign of the covenant. And heartily do I congratulate many young Christians here present, on the Scriptural joy and satisfaction with which God, our covenant God, allows them to think and to say this day, " This God is our God." If you are coming with intelligence, faith, and love, to your first communion, it must also be with lively gratitude

and praise. You may have known many happy days in your lives, you have known none so happy as this may be. What blessedness to belong to Christ, and what joy to receive the appointed pledges of his dying love! What comfort to be led by the Holy Spirit! "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the children of God!"

And you, my brethren, who could years ago say, "This God is our God," has the experience of years added nothing to the comfort and the peace expressed in those words? If the young Christian feels a lively joy in knowing God in his covenant of grace, is there not a joy of a deeper, sweeter, and more solid kind to him whom our God has for years been blessing with a Father's love, a Saviour's grace, and the consolations of his Spirit? If the racer, just starting in his course, may feel his heart beat high with expectation, ought he to despise who can almost say, "I have fought the good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of glory, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me at that day; and not unto me only, but unto all them who love his appearing?"

Some of you *cannot* say, "This God is our God:" you *know* that you cannot. Your baptism has been left alone, as though it were something with which infancy alone had any thing to do: it has never been thought of in childhood, youth, manhood, advancing life. Where is your personal repentance, and where your faith? When was the day, when the hour of your personally covenanting with God? Looking at Scripture with God in covenant—looking at the covenant offices of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, you know you cannot—without a presumption of which I hope you are incapable, say as yet, "This God is our God." Not *as yet!* And when shall it be? Shall it be ever? Is the thing so indifferent? Remember this, God is *willing* to be your God. His covenant offers are made to you; all your wants are met by the ample provision of that gracious covenant. Your sins are met with the offer of a full atonement through the precious blood of Christ. Your weakness, insufficiency, inability, are met with the offered strength of God's Holy Spirit. Your guilt and misery are met with the kindest offers of your Heavenly Father's love. And, sinner, make not this God your foe when he offers to be your friend. "Kiss the Son lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled, yea, but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

But it is time to leave our first part, and consider, in the second place, when we can truly say, "This God is our God," **WHAT MAY WE, ACCORDING TO THE SCRIPTURES, EXPECT FROM HIM.** You may expect this: he will fulfil his covenant relations to you. "This God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death."

"This God is our God." So God himself says: "I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people;" speaking of those who enter into covenant with him in his appointed way. In promising to be a God to his people, he promises all that they can need or even desire. God has infinite power, wisdom, goodness, and grace. All this, in promising to be a God to his people, he promises to employ and exercise in their behalf; his power to preserve, his wisdom to direct, his goodness to bless, his grace to crown with a full salvation.

The names of the three persons in the Trinity, with their respective offices, are, accordingly, full of interest to the people of God. I would advise young Christians to make in their memories a collection of the scriptural names of God—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and often to meditate thereon in the intervals of worldly duty. In hours of sorrow, the thought of your heavenly Father will be as melody to your souls. In times of temptation, what energy in the faithful recollection of your *Sanctifier*. And thus, as we often sing,

“ How sweet the name of Jesus sounds  
In a believer’s ears !  
It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds,  
And drives away his fears.

“ It makes the wounded spirit whole,  
It calms the troubled breast.  
‘Tis manna to the hungry soul,  
And to the weary, rest.”

O, my brethren, what is there that you may not hope and expect for your souls, if you can say, God himself allowing your claim, “ This God is our God ! ”

But *for how long* is this covenant to last ? “ For ever and ever : ” so says our text, and so say many other Scriptures. Thus David : “ He hath made with me an *everlasting* covenant, ordered in all things and sure.” “ The mercy of the Lord is from *everlasting* to *everlasting* upon them that fear him.” Thus the Apostle prays : “ Now the God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the *everlasting* covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will.” According to his covenant, God promises to “ cast all our sins into the depths of the sea,” to rise up in judgment against us no more ; to “ blot out as a cloud our transgressions, and as a thick cloud our sins.” And to those who form his spiritual children (I mean the church—the collection of those who accept his covenant) the Lord says, “ For a small moment have I forsaken thee ; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment : but with *everlasting* kindness will I have mercy upon thee, saith the Lord, thy Redeemer. For this”—(that is, this covenant)—“ is as the waters of Noah unto me : for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah shall no more go over the earth ; so have I sworn that I would not be wrath with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed ; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy upon thee.”

Thus the covenant engagements of our God reach into the boundless regions of eternity ; they are commensurate with eternity itself. Enlarge, my brethren, the mind ; expand the comprehension ; elevate the soul ; stretch every faculty, and try and grasp for a moment the idea of ETERNITY. The largest efforts of your mind fall short. God alone, the Infinite, the Eternal, the Omnipotent, can understand the full meaning of eternity. He is to be your God for all eternity ; to supply your wants ; to preserve, bless, sustain, and glorify. “ This God is our God for ever and ever.”

Further, as to what we may expect from him : “ He will be *our guide* even

unto death." Fallen man needs a divine guide: he is a lost sheep wandering on the mountains; he is a traveller who has lost his way; a blind man groping in darkness; alone, childish, ignorant, and helpless. God in covenant offers himself as the guide; the Holy Spirit guides to Jesus; *he* guides to the Father; and the Father takes us by the hand, receives with kindness, and leads forward in the footsteps of Jesus. If the Christian life is a pilgrimage, it is a pilgrimage begun, continued, and completed under the guidance of our God. Is it a warfare? He "teaches our hands to war, and our fingers to fight." Is it a voyage? He gives the vessel the chart, the compass, the pilot, the anchor, the favouring gale; he makes us to pass in safety over the waves of this troublesome world; he brings us to the haven where we would be. Is it nothing, O ye children of men, to have such a guide in God? From sin he will guide to pardon; pardoned, he will guide you to peace; at peace, he will guide you to hope; hopeful, he will guide you to joy; and thus made joyful by our God, you may be happy indeed. All through life he will be your guide.

However young some of you may be, at first entering into covenant with God (which you cannot do too early in life), and however many years it may please Him to spare you on earth, yet God's promise will be found sufficient for the longest life: the line that runs parallel with eternity, must of course reach as far as the extent of the little spot of this life. The danger, the scriptural danger, of falling away, is on your part, lest you be not sincere or faithful; lest you cherish some secret sin, or abuse your golden opportunities, or, after having seemed to set out well, began to linger oft, and then draw back. Here is the place for fear, for self-suspicion, self-examination, watchfulness, and much effort, in humble dependence on our God. As to his covenant itself it is everlasting: "He will guide even unto death."

And will he leave us *there*? It cannot be; for if he will "guide us unto death," as one part of our text says, and if he is "our God for ever and ever," as the other clause of the text declares, then he will guide us *in* death, *through* death, and *over* and *beyond* death. And so some have rendered this passage: instead of "he will be our guide even *unto* death," they render it, "he will be our guide even *over* death." There are in Scripture many very fine promises for the people of God in that most *trying* hour—for such it is to the thinking mind. Many stifle their fears of death and shun the subject. Many affect to laugh at death; and many rush on it with a rash presumption, or submit to it with sullen reluctance. But let a man only think, Death ends a life of probation, and introduces into a life of retribution; death carries the sinner's soul before his God, who judgeth not as man judgeth; death fixes a man's eternal state, for heaven or hell: there can be no return for a man to live his opportunities over again: let a man but think of this, and he will never mock the fears, doubts, sorrows, and anxieties of a dying bed. But God will be our guide there, brethren, if we come to him in his covenant way: in death, through death, beyond death, he will be our guide: "My flesh and my heart faileth; God will be the strength of my heart and my portion for ever." For himself God was, of course, incapable of death; but as Mediator Christ died, and tasted death for all men. Dying as the atoning sacrifice for sin, and his sacrifice being accepted of the Father, he has taken away the fear of death—which is sin—for all his faithful people. "Though I pass through the valley

of the shadow of death," they can say, "I will fear no evil, for thou art with me." "To die is gain." This Spirit is still their Comforter even then: their Father ceases not to love them even then. Why, would an earthly father feel his affection diminish at such an hour of his child's affliction? How much less will God, our heavenly Father, refuse to pity his poor child, struggling with the form of death. Will he not guide his quivering spirit to Him who is "the hiding-place from the winds, and the covert from the tempest; as a river of water in a dry place, and as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land?"

But we must conclude. In conclusion that question is again forced upon us, Is this God our covenant God? Time was when he was not: he was our God as a Sovereign and Judge, and a God offended and insulted; but not as our God in covenant. We knew not the office of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: we had no hope, besides a presumptuous one: our faith was only the name, our penitence was a shadow, and our love to God was a cold and dead faith. Such was our state. Are we not humbled? Have we not cause? But is this God our God now? That question has been asked before: I repeat it now, because now you have fresh means of judging. Are you deriving from God those benefits for which he covenants with his people? Are you receiving pardon from the Son, sanctification from the Holy Spirit, and grace and love from the Father? Nay, are you seeking for those things, and pleading your own covenant as your plea? Is God your guide from day to day, by his Word and Spirit, by the motives of the Gospel, by the example of Christ? Now those questions, faithfully applied, will help to settle the question, Is this God our God?

If he is not, do make him such. Let not this, which is the last of our great festivals of this year, pass by and see you still what you were—out of covenant with God. Without and beyond that covenant all is darkness, misery, and death; within all is life, blessedness, and light. Come while you may; death will soon be here: let it not find you strangers to our God, and to his grace, while his covenant, with such blessed promises, invites you to accept it. If there be motive in the cross of Christ—if there be persuasion in the grace of the Holy Spirit—if any influence in the Father's love—let this be a day of covenanting with God, in a covenant never to be broken.

To those who are coming presently to the sacrament I would say one word: I cannot, and I need not, say much. Time presses; our whole subject has addressed them; and the occasion connected with our sacrament to-day is too interesting, and excites feelings too deep for many words. For this is the day, even our Trinity Sunday, on which our church is to receive, I believe some sixty or seventy, or more, youthful members in full communion from this congregation. This is no every day occurrence. I have been, and still am, oppressed with the responsibility. I have laboured with them in private; my conscience and theirs are witnesses, that after having endeavoured faithfully to teach them and encourage them, I have also endeavoured, on the one hand, that I might restrain any of them who might be too forward or too careless, to restrain them from coming in their present state of mind to so sacred an ordinance; and, on the other hand, that I might encourage the weakest and most timid who ought to come; whom the Saviour himself (who never broke the bruised reed, nor quenched the smoking flax) would not discourage if he were

personally here. If in this difficult duty I have erred, and unintentionally made one sad whom the Lord would not have made sad, may the Lord himself forgive. But now having laboured to prepare, and been much encouraged by many hopeful signs and proofs that my labour in this matter has not been in vain in the Lord, let us go presently, with a prepared heart and quiet conscience, and a humble faith, to that spiritual feast, to receive the appointed tokens of the dying love of our blessed Lord and Saviour; and there to seek and to have faith in him exercised, gratitude to him, and to his Father, and to his Holy Spirit increased, and devotedness to this Triune God greatly confirmed. O may this be to you, my young friends, the first of many happy communions; the foretaste of heaven, as the grapes of Eschol, the specimen and the pledge of the fruits of Canaan!

To the young, and persons not yet confirmed, and to others not yet coming to the sacrament, who have felt their desires drawn out on this occasion, I would say, Look forward with hope, and prepare with diligence, that your time may come, if it please God to suffer you, you may be admitted to the same gracious privilege.

To elder Christians, who may come now, or who may have come on the last or present Sunday, let them yet endeavour to help the young with their prayers. If there are worldly friends of any of the young persons, I would earnestly entreat them to refrain from any thing like mockery or discouragement towards any one of these young disciples. Let brothers and sisters who may not at present feel as they ought to feel, and as I hope they will soon feel, the value of the Saviour, and the blessedness of an interest in the covenant of God—let them beware lest that warning should apply to them: “ Whosoever shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the depths of the sea.”

Let aged believers rejoice that so many are stepping forward in the Christian ranks, ready to supply their places, which they know must very soon be left vacant. Young and old, high and low, rich and poor, all you that have to die see that you have this God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—now, henceforth, over death, and beyond death, even for ever and ever.

## THE UNALTERABLE NATURE OF THE DECISIONS OF THE JUDGMENT.

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REV. G. SPRING, D.D.

UNION CHAPEL, ISLINGTON, MAY 16, 1835.

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"And besides all this, there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence."—LUKE, xvi. 26.

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No truth is more fully accredited by believers in divine revelation than that there will be a day when God will judge the world. O! it will be a day of deep concern and deep solicitude. Every mind in the universe will be awoken when God pronounces the destinies of men. It is a day that will lift the curtain—that will bring forward the long-expected scenes of the future world—that will usher the race of man into the regions of immortality—and that will disclose the catastrophe of that vast, magnificent plan which has occupied all time to accomplish. Think of Lazarus—think of Dives; and you will know how to estimate the designs and the decisions of the great and fearful day. It was, you know, the rich man that lay in that burning lake, and that the father of the faithful announced in his ears the unchanging decree that I have just read. He had been imploring Abraham to send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water to cool his tongue, because he was tormented in that flame. But even this was a boon that could not be granted in that world of torment: he in his life-time had received his good things, likewise Lazarus his evil things; but now Lazarus is comforted, and he is tormented. Besides, Lazarus could not go: there was an impervious, insurmountable barrier: "Between us and you," says the father of the faithful, "there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence."

In this very affecting declaration, three things are distinctly observed: That by the allotments of his providence in the present world, the God of heaven does not distinguish between the righteous and the wicked; that at the close of their probationary state there will be a difference between them; and that their condition then will remain for ever unalterable.

In the first place, **BY THE ALLOTMENTS OF HIS PROVIDENCE IN THE PRESENT WORLD GOD DOES NOT DISTINGUISH BETWEEN THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE WICKED.**

It has been the grief of many good men that the dispensations of providence in this world afford so little evidence of the impartiality and rectitude of the divine government. Indeed without some intimation that the present is a state of trial rather than a retributive state, there would be no inconsiderable ground for their apprehension. It was the complaint of the wise man that "there is

a vanity that is common upon earth ; that there be just men unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked ; again there be wicked men unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous." In the distribution of mercies and judgments in the present world there is so little discrimination of the moral character, that one might be tempted to contend it were matter of indifference to the Sovereign Ruler of events. " All things come alike to all : there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked—to him that serveth God, and to him that serveth him not : no man knoweth either love or hatred by all that is before him."

It is true that the friends of God enjoy a sweet composure of mind, an inward serenity of peace, a hope of pardon and acceptance which the wicked do not enjoy : but with regard to outward mercies, his enemies are often blessed above his friends. The Church has often complained that the wicked were happy—that they that work wickedness are set up—that they that tempt God are ever delivered. The most choice comforts are often reserved for the proudest heart, the highest honours for the most flagitious life, the most remarkable deliverances for the most presumptuous. The Psalmist once thought to understand this, but it was too painful for him ; his feet had almost gone, his steps had well nigh slipped ; because he was envious at the foolish, when he saw the prosperity of the wicked. The men of the world are represented in the Scriptures as having their portion in this life : whether it be to shew the comparative meanness and insignificance of all earthly good, or that the Father of mercies is kind even to the evil and the unthankful ; or to illustrate their own impenitence and obduracy ; or to give them an opportunity of more rapidly filling up the measure of their iniquity ; or to accomplish all these purposes—the fact is unquestionable that, in the history of our world, by far the greater portion of those who, like the rich man in the parable, have fared sumptuously every day, have been of the wicked rather than of the righteous. It is true that there are impressive indications of the divine declaration against iniquity ; the hurricane, the volcano, the pestilence, the flood, the tempest, with all their terrific ravages, together with the numberless sorrows and many agonies that agitate the world in which we dwell, are tokens of human apostacy only as they are tokens of God's displeasure for its iniquities. Nor have there been wanting instances which could not fail to attract attention, in which the wrath of God has been revealed from heaven against the unrighteousness and the ungodliness of men. The whole world was swept away by the waters of the deluge : Sodom was overthrown as in a moment : Babylon sunk like a millstone into the depths of the sea. And yet an attentive observer will be drawn to the conclusion, that this is not the world in which the holy God designs to make the distinction between righteous and wicked men. The real disposition must be exhibited in the distributions of good and evil in accordance with their present character. The present world, therefore, is but the scene of trial with a view to a righteous retribution : we must look beyond if we would see the line of demarcation between the friends and the foes of God drawn with visible hand.

We follow the suggestions of our text, and observe, therefore, in the second place, that AT THE CLOSE OF THEIR PRESENT STATE OF TRIAL THERE WILL BE A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE WICKED.

The time of trial on earth, dear hearers, was not designed to be long. It is appointed to men once to die: death closes the scene in which the holy and the profane appear in an undistinguishable garb, and discovers not only their true character, but their real state. Every man then enters upon allotments which, so far from being influenced by his earthly standing, are under the dispensation of grace by Jesus Christ, determined by his moral character. As there is an essential and immutable difference between holiness and sin; so is there a propriety in assigning different allotments to the righteous and the wicked. God cannot be just to himself, nor to the universe, without making it appear in another world that the difference of character between the righteous and the wicked lays a foundation for some difference in his manner of treating them. When Abraham drew near to entreat for the few righteous who were in Sodom, he rested his entreaties on this foundation, "Wilt thou destroy the righteous with the wicked?" "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" This is a sentiment common to the hearts of all men. However favourably their natural sentiments may induce them to judge of their own deserts, and whatever may be their designs, of course they have no idea that God will so far disregard his own character as to pay no respect to the characters of men here by fixing their condition hereafter. To say nothing of the nature and the extent of the difference, every man feels that between those who have done good and those who have done evil—between those who accept and those who reject the Lord Jesus Christ and his great salvation—there are many important differences in the future world: and every person, so far as he is acquainted with truth, feels this; and it would be a violation of the very sentiments of natural conscience to suppose the contrary.

The representation in the parable assures us that the conditions of the rich and the poor man in the future world were widely different. The poor man died, and was "carried by angels to Abraham's bosom;" the rich man died also, and "in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torment." What more impressive exhibition of the difference between the righteous and the wicked in a future world? The state of these two men is designed to be a just representation of all that have died, and all that ever shall die. Every individual of the human family will be found at last with Lazarus in heaven, or with Dives in hell. There are but two classes of moral character in the world, and there will be but two differences of condition, adapted to their difference of character in the next world. The righteous and the wicked will therefore be separated, and the difference between them will be seen and felt.

And in accordance with this representation is the testimony of the Scriptures: throughout we are told that the time is coming when God shall return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, and that that time is the end of the world. This truth is acknowledged and enforced in almost all the parables of the New Testament. The parable of the Vineyard contains it; the parable of the Sower contains it; the parable of the Marriage Supper contains it; the parable of the Ten Virgins contains it; the parables of the Talents, and the Wheat and the Tares contain it. To illustrate and enforce this truth our Lord gave it in charge to his apostles, wherever they went, to publish its sanctions and threatenings, as well as its offerings of mercy: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature: he that believes and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned." It is

also interwoven with the very genius and spirit of the whole Gospel: it is implied in its doctrines, it is implied in its precepts, it is implied in its phrases and terms of salvation; it is implied in its very promises.

If these do not draw a dividing line between the righteous and the wicked after death, then have they no significance and no import. But there is no part of the Bible in which this truth is more clearly taught, than in that unaffected but most affecting account which our Lord has given of the day of judgment. Permit me to read a few verses out of the affecting representation “When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” “Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” O! we think that no man could read this narrative without being convinced that it is the design of Jesus Christ to inform the world by it, that he would at the last judgment make a wide difference between the righteous and the wicked. I say a *wide* difference: the righteous will be holy as God is holy, lovely and beloved; and their bosom shall become the reflection of all that is serene and joyful in the heavenly world; while the wicked shall be matured in wickedness; hateful and hating, their minds shall be the sink of every inordinate and ungratified lust and affection. The righteous shall dwell in the heavenly city, the new Jerusalem, the pure palace of the skies; while the wicked shall inhabit the darkest dungeon, the deepest cavern, the most mournful prison in the universe. The righteous will be associated with just men, the angels of God, and the adorable Redeemer; while the wicked are associated with the evil spirits of incorrigible men, and the viler companions of the prince of darkness. There will be a difference of character, of place, of employment, of prospect, of condition universal. They will be unlike in every conceivable particular; a great gulf will lie between them, a chasm that is indefinitely wide and without a bottom; a vast continent, an immense world, will lie on either side, entirely dissimilar in every view, except that of bare existence and accountability. There are no common sympathies between them—there is no communion, no reciprocity either of enjoyment or suffering; there is no common lot; what is known and felt on the one side, is unknown and unfelt on the other. If there be pain, and woe, and despair on the one side, there is none on the other; and if there be happiness, and joy, and exultation on the one side, there is none on the other. So that their several allotments will be a state of unmixed happiness or unmixed misery.

Dear hearers, look up to Abraham's bosom; and, if you can, look down to that tormenting flame. Hear the sweet song of Lazarus; and listen to the moans of Dives. See how widely the righteous and wicked differ in a future world. What a picture is here presented to our view! On one side this gulf we see nothing but unalloyed, pure, perfect happiness—on the other, nothing but unmixed, pure, perfect misery. On the one side, the sons and daughters of Adam are separated from all evil, and advanced to all good—on the other, they are separated from all mercy, and doomed to all ruin. The wicked are

here clothed in rags, and the righteous shine in all the beauties of holiness and the fine linen of the saints. The wicked are here denied a drop of water to cool their tongues ; and the righteous drink of the river of the water of life from the throne of God and of the Lamb. The wicked have no rest day nor night in the tormenting fire of God's indignation ; and the righteous rest from their labours, and their works follow them. The wicked, while they behold the blessedness of the righteous, are represented as blaspheming God, and gnawing their tongues for their pain ; and the righteous go forth and sing, " Hallelujah ! Hallelujah !" while the smoke of the torment of the damned ascends up for ever and ever. O, fellow immortal ! where art thou going ? Is every living man in this assembly to be assigned to one or other of these allotments ? How long ? O how long ? How long, did I say ? Look at the text. The decisions of eternal justice never will be reviewed or altered : it is an impassable gulf. And this leads me,

**In the third place, to show that THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE WICKED IN THE FUTURE WORLD WILL REMAIN UNALTERED.**

When the rich man craved a drop of water to cool his tongue, he was not only reminded that in the present world he had had his good things, and Lazarus his evil things ; but besides all this, that there was a great gulf fixed between him and the righteous ; that between him and the righteous there was an impassable distance ; so that they who would pass from heaven to hell could not, neither could they cross from hell to heaven. How could they ? There was an impassable gulf between them, and which is between them still : much as the method and ingenuity of men have been apt to devise means to remove or to cross it, it is just as vain as the expectation of Dives to procure a drop of water from Lazarus. Who does not see, that the only construction of this representation is, that there will be no change in the allotments of men after they leave this world ? After once being removed into heaven, the righteous shall not be thrust down into hell ; after having been once shut up in hell, the wicked shall never enter heaven. This position requires a little illustration.

*In the first place, the righteous after having been once admitted into heaven, shall never sink to hell.*

And who will call in question this precious truth, my hearers ? Listen to the declaration of the Saviour : " These shall go away into *life eternal*." " He that believeth shall be saved." The Father's command is " *life everlasting*." Listen also to the decisions of the Scripture : " At God's right hand there are pleasures for evermore." " There shall be no more pain, neither death ; for the former things are passed away." And from that eternal temple it is expressly said, " he shall go no more out." Who does not see that this representation accords with all the principles of God's moral government, with all the dictates of sound reason, and all the better feelings of our hearts ? Besides, we do not see how the perfect benevolence of God could be otherwise gratified, than by confirming the righteous in their integrity and blessedness. For what did God create the world—for what is all this vast machinery in his Providence, and the still more wonderful method of his grace—for what the incarnation and the death of his only Son—for what the descent of the Holy Spirit, and the renovation and purity of his people—for what the day and means of grace and salvation—for what the final judgment, and the final

sentence—if after all this exhibition of wisdom, and love, and power, the inhabitants of the heavenly world, may, at some remote period in eternity, leave their abodes of glory, and sink to the realms of woe?

There are but three ways in which we can conceive the character and condition of the righteous in the heavenly world will be ever altered. Either there must be something there to change the character and diminish the joys of the inhabitants; or they themselves must change their character and destiny; or God himself must change his purposes, and their dispositions, and by his own Almighty and irresistible energy, make them sinful. But is there any thing in the heavenly world that will tend to change the character or diminish the joys of its holy inhabitants? God is there: but he is without variableness or shadow of a turning. If the pure spirits around his throne *ever* have reason to love and adore him, they will *always* have reason to do so. And since God does not alter, their affections and joys will not alter. Throughout ceaseless ages, still he unfolds the lustre of his character; and those who have once beheld his beauty, can never be offended with his excellency, or weary with his glory. Nor will there be any thing in the character of the angels, in the employments and enjoyments of the heavenly world, that will have the least tendency to satiate or disgust the redeemed, but every thing to cherish and enkindle within them the flame of hallowed joy.

And as there is nothing in heaven to alter the disposition of its inhabitants, so the inhabitants will never voluntarily turn their backs upon it. They have no motive to do so, either from their judgment, their conscience, their prevailing disposition, or their best interests. And if the saints would be satisfied with their inheritance, and never choose the portion of the reprobate; so have we the assurance of the God of truth and love, that he will never influence them so to do. Nay, his faithfulness, and mercy, and inviolability, are pledged to keep them; his eternal covenant is pledged to keep them: nothing shall pluck them out of his hand; nothing shall separate them from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus their Lord.

O, dear hearers, whose heart does not fasten itself on this inestimable truth? What child of grace does not look down upon the mighty chasm between him and the lost, and rejoice that they who would pass from thence cannot? On this interesting point, therefore, every fear may be hushed. We have the assurance of the God of truth, that the heavenly inheritance “fadeth not away,” “by two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie; that they might have strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before them; which hope they have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, that which is within the veil.” Nor could there possibly be more certainty; nor could there be any doubt, or one moment’s hesitation here. Tell me, when you open the everlasting doors to welcome my departing spirit, that the time may come when this inheritance may fail, and you take away the anchor of my hope. Publish the tidings in heaven, that their blessedness is not eternal, and the songs of seraphs are converted to notes of woe. Thanks be to God no such mournful tidings shall ever fall upon their ears. “There is a great gulf fixed, so that they which would pass from hence to you, cannot; neither can they pass to us that would come from thence.”

But the inquiry is not the less interesting, and it is not the less instructing, Will the *wicked* after having been once shut up in *hell*, ever be admitted to

*heaven?* My dear brethren, who shall answer it but God? What has the God of heaven said on this momentous subject? How readest thou? I find in the Bible such declarations as these: "These shall go away into *everlasting punishment*;" they shall awake to "shame and *everlasting contempt*;" they shall be "punished with *everlasting destruction*;" they shall be consigned to "the *bottomless pit*;" "the smoke of their torment shall ascend *for ever and ever*;" "The worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." Now if language can express the never-ending misery of the wicked, is it not here expressed? If God can reveal this truth, it is here revealed. These and such like declarations determine with certainty, that the miseries of the wicked will run parallel and be coeval with the happiness of the good. An impartial examination of the Scriptures will convince every reflecting mind, that they furnish the same evidence of the unalterable allotments of the wicked, as they do of the unalterable allotments of the righteous. Our text presents us with nothing but a gulf equally impassable to both.

But this is not all. According to our selfish views, we very naturally suppose that, while the inhabitants of heaven will never wish to go to hell, the inhabitants of hell may wish to go to heaven. No doubt the wicked will earnestly desire to be delivered from their pains, but will they desire the holy happiness of heaven? What is there in heaven to make it desirable to an unholy mind? Nothing: rather every thing which to a wicked man would render it the object of revulsion and disgust. Nor is there any reason to expect—as has often been said amongst them as well as amongst us—that the punishment of the damned will ever change their disposition, or soften and purify their hearts, so as to prepare them for the bliss of heaven. Suffering never leads men to God and holiness; punishment will not lead a bad man to love the punisher.

Besides: where do you find the least intimation in the Bible, that God punishes the wicked in a future world for their benefit? No where: it is the delusion of the depraved heart. On the contrary, he declares that he punishes them, not in kindness to reclaim them, but in anger to curse them—not in mercy to save them, but in wrath to destroy them. Satan and Beelzebub are no more meet for the enjoyment of heaven, than when they entered the world of woe. In defiance of all their sufferings, the wicked in hell will remain the avowed enemies of God; and being thus eternally unqualified for heaven, will never find access across the gulf to those immortal regions of bliss.

Further: there is not the least intimation in the Word of God that he will devise (as has been sometimes thought) any mode by which his enemies will be hereafter restored to his favour. Who can be so infatuated as to indulge the thought that after a preparation of thousands of years for a day of final decision, and after the decisions of that day shall have been finally pronounced, that there shall be another day of grace, another Saviour, other offers of mercy—that God will pour out his Spirit upon the tenants of the pit, and revive his work in the regions of despair? Do we not know, have we not heard, that at the close of that day it shall be said with awful emphasis—"He that is filthy let him be filthy still?" Do we not know that "God spared not his *only Son*," and that "there remaineth *no more sacrifice for sin*?"

Besides: there will be no opportunity for the wicked inhabitants of hell to be saved by Jesus Christ, because they have been condemned for rejecting

him: and moreover, he will have given up the kingdom to God, even the Father. When the Lord Jesus shall return from heaven to pronounce the sentence and fix the allotments of the assembled universe, the restitution of all things spoken of by the prophet since the world began will be accomplished, and the mediatorial kingdom will be closed; the day of heaven and of hope will be closed; there will be no possibility of reconciliation with God, for there will be no mediator; the great gulf will be fixed: heaven and hell shall remain for ever, and the impassable gulf eternally remain.

Are these, beloved hearers, mere words, and empty speculation? or are they truths in which you and I have no concern? As you reflect on what has been said, allow me to remind you, in the first place, *that every man who hears me will find at last his unalterable allotment in heaven or hell.* While here in this house of prayer each one possesses the character of the righteous or the wicked: one of these characters you will possess as long as you remain in the present world: one of them you will possess when you come to die, and when you rise up from the dead, and when you appear before God in judgment: and the character you then possess will determine your residence in heaven or in hell.

This will prove true not merely of those who lived before the flood—not merely of those who lived during the prophetical and apostolical ages—but for their children, and their children's children; of no people more than this, and of no living men, dear hearers, more than you. You may not realize it, but it is not on that account the less true: nay, perhaps some of you may think it all an idle tale; but it will not for this reason prove the less true: you may be thoughtless and unconcerned about it, but it will not on this account prove the less true or the less interesting, the less important, the less amazing and stupendous. Men are very apt to feel—and it is one of the delusions of the adversary over the human mind—men are very apt to think there is no such thing as hell, simply because they do not believe it; just as though its existence depended on their belief. *You* will not believe there is a hell. Well, what of that? Does this prove there is none? *You* do not believe there is a hell: what does this prove but that you are in the broad way that conducts to that dark abode?

There is a class of men, dear hearers, that will never believe there is a hell till they have plunged into it. Ah! if you could blot hell out of the universe as easily as you can disbelieve it, I would not thus alarm you; I would not thus stand here wasting my breath, entreating you to escape the coming wrath. Remember God can send you to hell without your believing it. He does not ask leave of your wishes, nor of your opinion. No, no: there is not an individual in this assembly that will not at last find his unalterable allotment in heaven or hell: O, how inexpressibly solemn the thought! Heaven or hell! Not one of this assembly that will not, in a very few years, find his residence in heaven or hell!

Secondly, we learn from our subject that *all may know before they leave this world what will be their future and final condition.*

This is a subject on which men may well exercise deep thought, painful solicitude: What will become of us? Dear hearers, the question is easily answered. Who went to Abraham's bosom? Who sunk to that tormenting flame? It matters not whether you are old or young, rich or poor, wise or unwise,

honourable or despised, in order to know whether you go to heaven or hell. It was no crime in Dives to be rich, and it was no virtue in Lazarus to be poor: but the one was the friend, and the other was the enemy of Jesus Christ: the one forsook and the other persevered in his course of iniquity; the one accepted and the other rejected the great salvation: the one was born of God—justified, sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Holy Spirit, and made meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light; the other remained dead in sin, and thoughtless, and condemned, and unholy, and a vessel of wrath fitted to destruction. This is the time, the infallible time. You have only to determine whether you are the friend or the enemy of God, in order to tell whether you are prepared to enjoy his favour or suffer his wrath. If you love God (cold as your love has been), if you accept his salvation, if you love his cause, if you love his truth, and if you do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God through the rich grace in Jesus Christ—though your iniquities are like mountains, they shall be pardoned and blotted out, and you will at last be awarded to eternal life. But if you remain unconcerned, and thoughtless, and dead in sin, and contentious, and disobedient to the truth, and reject the Saviour, what else can await you but indignation and wrath? The question for eternity is a simple but an amazing one: the question for eternity is decided in time, and usually within the short compass of a very few years. It is in the present world, and in these days of mercy, that you are forming your character for an everlasting existence beyond the grave; and you are forming them with inconceivable rapidity. Life is the seed-time; eternity is the harvest. “Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption: but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.”

Permit me to add once more, in view of this subject, *how solemn and affecting the responsibility of the present hour!* Human life is but a moment; and yet within this short term are crowded all the momentous concerns of an interminable existence. With ineffably tender interest, therefore, does our subject say to every individual in this assembly, “Behold now is the accepted time! behold now is the day of salvation!” I stand in this sacred place, dear brethren, with no expectation of seeing your faces again till I see you at the bar of God: and I am concerned to ask myself which of this large assembly will be numbered with the righteous, and who will be gathered with the wicked? Awful question—enough to make an angel tremble! And yet it is rushing on our minds with inconceivable force in view of such a subject as this. O what child of Gospel mercy is there here who must at last find an allotment less tolerable than that of Sodom and Gomorrah? What man in advanced age, or in middle life, will then be seen to have gained the world at the expense of his soul? What youth whose way to the pit has been hedged up by counsels, and prayers, and tears, will at last be doomed to misery? Who, of all that hear me, will become more and more obdurate in their impiety—will still rush on the thick bosses of Jehovah’s buckler, and in defiance of all the protestations of judgment and of conscience, and with all the sturdiness of devils, force their way to the furnace of God’s wrath?

It will be a glorious life that the righteous shall attain—a dreadful death that the wicked die. When the angels shall come to bind the tares in bundles, and to burn them, and to gather the wheat into the garner of the great

Husbandman, how wide the difference that may be made between some who occupy these pews! One may be taken and another left: Two women shall be grinding at the mill; one shall be taken and the other left: two may occupy the same seat; the one shall be taken, and the other left: two may sleep in the same bed; the one shall be taken, and the other left: and between them there shall be a great and eternal gulf: there shall be no intercourse, no change of condition: no, no—none: after death every thing remains unaltered; it is an unalterable eternity!

I am sure there is not a mightier truth in the Bible than this; there is not a mightier truth in the whole circle of the universe than this. O the tremendous thought—an unalterable eternity! How shall I speak of it? How shall I magnify it? How shall I represent it to your mind or my own? I have sometimes thought of the amazing responsibilities of the preacher's office; and they can be appreciated only in view of an unalterable eternity. I have sometimes inquired of myself when called to the chamber of sickness, How shall I address the immortal, dying man, who in a few hours will become an inhabitant of an unalterable eternity? I have sometimes thought of my own hopes in Jesus Christ, and ventured to cherish and rejoice in the confidence of a holier world, and rest with God. But when I have recollect ed that the decisions of the judgment are unalterable, and that once shut up in hell there shall be no escape—O! I tremble to the very core lest after all I should become a castaway. Tell me, beloved hearers, which of you will go up with Lazarus to Abraham's bosom? Which of you will accept the Lord Jesus, and inhabit that unalterable heaven? Which of you will go down with Dives to the tormenting flame? Which of you will reject this great salvation, and inhabit that unalterable hell? Tell me, O tell me, are the destinies beyond the grave unalterable; and is there one of you that will persevere in sin? Are they unalterable, and is there one of you that will continue impenitent and without Christ, and without God, and without hope? Are they unalterable, and can you any more reject an offered Saviour? O! this is the thought that oppresses my bosom, my dear hearers, when I contemplate another world—that the destinies of immortal beings once fixed cannot be altered; no, never, never, never: it is an eternal heaven; and O! it is an eternal hell!

## THE GOSPEL HARVEST.

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REV. B. GODWIN,

SURREY CHAPEL, JUNE 17, 1835 \*.

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" Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, for they are white already to harvest."  
JOHN, iv. 35.

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THAT part of the evangelical history from which the words of our text are taken informs us, that our Lord Jesus Christ having, in the course of his travels, occasion to pass through Samaria, sat down upon a well, exhausted with fatigue, about the hour of noon: that a woman of Samaria coming about that time to draw water, our Lord Jesus Christ entered into conversation with her; and at once her mind was deeply impressed, first that he was a prophet, and subsequently, it appears, that he was the Messiah. The woman, anxious to impart these tidings to her countrymen, went into the city to call them to come and see this wonderful person. His disciples, in the mean time, had gone away to purchase food, and when they returned, and found that he had been conversing with the woman of Samaria, they were exceedingly surprised: and when he had further entered into conversation with them, they, supposing that some one had brought him meat to eat, received from him the assurance, that "his meat was to do the will of him that sent him, and to finish his work." His disciples entreating him to eat, he said, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of." In their simplicity they took these words in their literal acceptation; and this led to the answer which we have already stated: "Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." (O for more of this spirit to animate the whole of the Christian church! May this be the meat of each of us; such the spirit in which we all act!)

Our Lord Jesus Christ proceeds to intimate to them, that the time was now approaching when they would have to enter upon their work in a far more extended and energetic manner, "Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh the harvest?"—alluding, according to the opinion of some, to the usual time that elapsed between the seed-time and the harvest; according to others, to the season of the year: "Look around on the fields; you see indications that four months must elapse before the reaper enters into the harvest field. Not so with the work which is before *us*; I say unto you, the time is now at hand. Consider the prophecies; mark the providence of God; look on the impression already made on the minds of the Samaritans. Compare all these things together, and see that there are sufficient indications that the time is approaching, when we must, in a more energetic and efficient manner, enter upon the great work which is before *us*." So our Lord Jesus Christ says, on another occasion: "The harvest," said he, alluding to the inga-

\* Anniversary Sermon for the Baptist Missionary Society

thering of souls to him—"The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few."

There are two important periods in the views which the Scriptures give us of the establishment and extension of the kingdom of Jesus Christ: the one when it was a stone cut out of the mountain without hands; the other when it became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth: the one, when it was announced, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand;" and the other, when it shall be declared, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ." In many circumstances connected with these two remarkable periods, there are many points of similarity. It is, indeed, often difficult to know to which period the words of prophecy refer—whether to the first triumphs of Christianity, or to its final and universal extension. Sometimes, probably, the words may be used in a primary and sometimes in a secondary sense—referring, in the first instance, to their partial accomplishment at the first conquests of Christianity; and in the second instance, to their complete fulfilment, when the kingdom of Christ shall become universal. For instance, it was declared by prophecy to the father of the faithful, that in him, "all nations—all families of the earth should be blessed." This received a partial fulfilment when the Saviour came, and the Gospel was first preached to the Gentiles: its complete fulfilment is reserved to the period when "all nations shall serve him." The dying patriarch, with a fine prophetical spirit, declared, that the people should be gathered to the Messiah. And Isaiah, in somewhat similar terms, speaks of the Gentiles flocking to him, over whom he should reign. This was fulfilled partially, when first the standard of the cross was erected; but its complete fulfilment will not take place, till the knowledge of God shall become universal. That memorable prophecy of Joel, respecting the communication of the Divine Spirit, received its accomplishment also, when, at the day of Pentecost, the effusion of the Divine Spirit produced such astonishing effects. And yet it is impossible to read this prophecy in Joel, with all its attendant circumstances, without being fully convinced, that its complete fulfilment is still in reserve.

Without indulging in any fanciful analogies, any Christian mind may, we conceive, discern many striking points of similarity between the introduction of the Gospel dispensation, and the introduction of the latter-day glory; so that the very same terms may be applied, in a certain sense, to both. By the first introduction of Christianity, and the publication of the Gospel, one complete series of prophecies was fulfilled, respecting the birth, the life, the death, the resurrection, the ascension of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. By the wise establishment of his kingdom, its more complete and universal extension, another series of prophecies will emerge from their obscurity; and the Revelation of John will become as intelligible to the Church of God, as the fifty-third chapter of the prophecies of Isaiah. The first dispensation, or the first introduction of the Christian economy, was marked by the destruction of a system which had corrupted the revelation of God, made vain the commandments of God through human tradition, and opposed the greatest obstacle to the progress of the Gospel; and the second, and more extended triumphs of Christianity, we are assured, will be marked by the destruction of a system that has equally corrupted Christianity itself: which power the Lord will destroy with the spirit of his mouth, and with the brightness of his coming. The first period

was marked by the shaking of the nations, which, while thus fulfilling the ancient predictions, paved the way for the spread of the Gospel. And though in the prophecy, statements which refer to the future are still in a considerable measure obscure, yet we know that great commotions are yet to be expected, before the Gospel shall take its final and universal spread. The first period was marked by the calling of the Gentiles, when the middle wall of partition was broken down, and all declared to be one. The latter dispensation of divine grace, which shall extend further the kingdom of Christ, will be distinguished by the calling of the Jews, when there shall be one fold under one Shepherd. The first period was marked by the missionary spirit: they went forth every where preaching the word: and the latter period is significantly exhibited to us by the symbol of an angel flying through the expanse of heaven, having the everlasting Gospel to preach to all people, and tongues, and kindreds. But there is this important difference between the two periods, that the state of glory and of blessedness of the latter period, are to be far more extensive and universal. The wide world is to share its blessings: it is to be perpetuated through a long succession of ages; so that though the ingathering of souls to Christ, at the first conquests of Christianity, may have been called a "harvest" with propriety, with reference to what went before, it is but as the first-fruits compared with what we yet expect. After the first establishment of Christianity, a series of most disastrous circumstances attended it; "and except the Lord of hosts had left us a very small remnant, we had been as Sodom, and had become like unto Gomorrah." But the latter period is not only to be universal, and not only to embrace the blessings of the former—all nations, and people, and tongues, and kindred; but it is to extend through a long period of successive ages.

I venture to think, then, brethren, that the words which I have taken, may not be inapplicable to the present time; that we are arrived, in the lapse of time, at such a period, and at such a position in the circumstances of the church and the world, as justify the application of these words in a very peculiar and emphatic manner to the present time: "Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, for they are white already to harvest."

May I, then, entreat your patient and candid attention, while I shall endeavour, as briefly as possible, to notice, in the first place, that after all that has yet been done, the great harvest remains to be gathered in. Secondly; that a concurrence of circumstances seems to indicate, that the time of this great harvest is at hand. And, thirdly, that this should be met by corresponding sentiments and conduct on the part of the Church of God.

In the first place, then, Christian brethren, THE GREAT HARVEST REMAINS YET TO BE GATHERED IN.

From what we are permitted to know of the councils of heaven respecting the redemption of man, we are led to infer, that the plans and purposes of Almighty goodness and grace have yet received but a very partial accomplishment; and that the purposes of God embrace the salvation of man to an extent that has never yet been realized, as we conceive; revealed with a clearness which we cannot mistake, with a certainty which we ought not to doubt. We must not conceive of the plan of redemption as a remedial measure, adopted merely after the catastrophe of man's fall and ruin. Before the Eternal Mind

all the consequences of man's apostacy stood, with all the ruin in which the human race would be involved: before the creation of the world or man's existence, he saw, and for wise ends permitted, the temporary triumph of evil. But an eternal decree passed, that its power and prevalence should be limited; and the language of this decree, fixing its limits, was, "Hitherto shalt thou go, but no further." God designed, from the dilapidated ruins and shattered fragments of a fallen world, to erect to himself a temple, vast and magnificent in which the glory of God should shine, and the praises of God be sung, the top-stone of which should be brought forth with shouting, crying, "Grace, grace, unto it." He therefore laid its foundations wide and deep, and marked out for its dimensions an ample space, proportioned to the glory of the Divine Architect himself. He saw the dismal prospect of the wide-spread desolation, over which the blight of sin had passed, on which the curse of transgression had rested: and he determined that the wilderness and the solitary place should be glad; that the desert should rejoice and blossom as the rose; that the renovated creation should be covered with verdure, and that the earth should yield her increase. The Divine plans, so far as they are revealed, assure us, that this should not be the case merely with one single favoured spot, surrounded by a waste-howling wilderness, but that it should extend to all lands; that the light of truth should not merely gild the tops of the highest immense, but it should be revealed, so that *all flesh* should see it, and *the earth* be filled with the knowledge of the glory of God; that the living waters which went forth from himself should unite their streams, till they should at length fall into a vast expanse of ocean, covering the whole earth.

The gracious intentions of God, as announced to us by the holy seers of antiquity, present to us a bright and glorious prospect. They looked through all the intervening ages of gloom, and misery, and woe, and saw better and brighter days rising upon the world, when there should be "one Lord in all the earth, and his name one;" when there should be one fold under one Shepherd, and all should acknowledge the Redeemer's sway. In such terms are the intentions of God announced, as lead us to conclude, that as yet they have been but very partially accomplished. Hitherto men have been found walking in the broad road: the course of this world has been *from* God, and *not to* God: departure from God has been the rule, return to God has been the exception. Vice and misery have spread like the inundation of a flood; while peace, truth, and righteousness, have been like streamlets, fertilizing some favoured spot of land. We may look around through all the present nations of the world, and read the record of their past history, and see that while nation has been opposing nation, generation after generation have had no hope, and lived without God in the world. And who, upon reviewing either the present state of the world, or the records of past history, can for a moment imagine, that all the vast plans of God respecting the salvation of man have been fulfilled?—who but must conclude, that the harvest still remains to be gathered in?

On any great question, Christian brethren, which involves any important interest, it is satisfactory to have evidence of various kinds. When proof of one kind only is possessed, suspicion is apt to intrude into the mind, that we may possibly have made a mistake favourable to our own wishes and inclinations. Will you, therefore, allow me further to state some circumstances,

which concur in shewing that we have not mistaken the announcements of the divine plan, or the tenor of the prophecies of God, when we consider that the great harvest still remains to be gathered in.

The means which God has employed in the salvation of man lead us to the same conclusion. The expedient to which Infinite Wisdom and Goodness had recourse, is one indeed of a most extraordinary kind: it is unfolded with a grandeur which no words can express, which no thoughts can reach. It possesses a solemn majesty, which, when we contemplate it properly, overawes the spirit. "Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh." That the effulgence of the divine glory should assume humanity; that He who was with God, and who was God, should be made flesh and dwell among us; that He who could say, "All that the Father hath is mine," should take upon himself our infirmities and bear our sorrows, is a miracle of miracles; is a wonder altogether unique: there is nothing like it in all the universe of God; there is nothing equal to it in all the works of God. It unites infinite extremes; it concentrates in one person all the attributes of the Deity, and all the properties of humanity; it brings down heaven to earth, it raises up earth to heaven. While it invests human nature with the perfection of God, it exhibits in one person all the might and the majesty of the Eternal with the weakness of human nature.

But, great as this wonder appears, it still seems to increase as the Saviour advances to that important crisis which was to finish his work. It was not to be completed merely by the exhibition and the view of his character, by the energy of his power: there was a work before him which, when he contemplated, even the Saviour shuddered, and was induced to say, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me." The darkest shadows passed over him; the waves of tribulation rolled over his head. He stands at the bar of man charged with blasphemy, with treason—condemned to die the death of a felon—is led to a public execution—hangs upon the cross, and expires amidst the hisses and the scorns of men, the exultation of demons, and under the stroke of that sword which nothing but Omnipotence could wield, which smote the sacred victim until he exclaimed, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

The temporary obscuration of all his glory, however, passed away when the third morning arose, and he was confessed "the Son of God with power." He ascends into heaven; he is placed on the throne of universal empire; the keys of hell and of death are placed within his hand: he has a name given him above every name that can be named; angels, principalities, and powers, pay their highest honours to him; the elders, the saints, and the angels of God, are ascribing glory, and honour, and blessing to him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb for ever.

Now, Christian friends, we see the wisdom of man always proportioning the means to the end, the expenditure to the purchase, the effort to the object. And this is the case, so far as we can understand the works and ways of God, so far as they come under our observation. And can any one suppose that all that has yet transpired is adequate to so vast an expenditure of means for the salvation of man, an expenditure of means possessed of such infinite grandeur? It was announced as the condition of the covenant of peace, that if he should make his soul a sacrifice for sin, he should "see of the travail of his soul, and should be satisfied." This was "the joy set before him," for which "he

endured the cross and despised the shame :" and in the contemplation of this he says, " I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." And he therefore sent forth his disciples to " go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." And will the Redeemer receive ample indemnification for all his sorrows—will his gracious and merciful heart feel the full recompence of all that he endured, by a small minority, by a fragment of the human race ? Will he " be satisfied," or will any thing reach to the terms that are here expressed, of his joy and satisfaction, short of the salvation of an inconceivably greater number than has ever yet been brought to the knowledge of the truth ? He was manifested for the express purpose of destroying the works of the devil. Till this be accomplished—as long as idolatry reigns over a very considerable portion of the globe, as long as imposture and delusion enslave the minds of men, as long as Christianity itself has its beauty disfigured, and its power neutralized, by the superstitions with which many have connected it—can any thing be adequate to this expense of means, short of that salvation, the extension of that salvation we have already noticed, which shall embrace all nations, and all tongues, and kindreds, and fill the whole earth with the divine glory ?

Once more : the magnitude of that scale on which the divine wisdom ~~has~~ proceeded in the preparatory process for introducing this great salvation to the world, perfectly concurs with the extent of the plan announced, the predictions that are given, and the means that are employed. In all the works of God, we see that he accomplishes his great and important objects, not by sudden strokes, but by a series of preparatory and introductory movements. The summer does not burst upon us at once in all its glories ; nor vegetation at once reach to all its luxuriance. The corn must first unfold its latent organization, hidden from our sight beneath the ground : and the grain that is sown for the future harvest has a considerable process to undergo before the harvest is brought forth ; it must germinate and put forth the blade, then the ear, and after that the full corn in the ear. And so we perceive, that in the way of divine providence, to accomplish any great event, we can generally notice a preparatory process which introduces the great event, and makes preparation for it. So it was in the exaltation of Joseph in Egypt : so it was in the release of the Jews from Babylon : and so you may observe in many of those circumstances of the Jewish history, which are recorded in the Book of God.

In general we may see, in all the works of nature, that those preparatory processes are generally proportioned to the great result in which they are to terminate : that whenever these processes are many and complicated, and spread over a considerable extent of time, some great result is generally contemplated, and in some extraordinary event they generally terminate. We see in nature, that the simplest organization generally arrives in the shortest period to its maturity. Who then can view all the preparatory processes which have evidently attended the introduction of the salvation of God into this world, and which are preparing it for the further extension of the great salvation, without forming the most magnificent expectations, and anticipating the greatest results which the world shall see, far beyond any that has yet been realized ?

That all that took place before the coming of Christ, was preparatory, will

so admitted. And I think that a comprehensive view of all which has taken place since the coming of Christ, will impress the mind of the Christian with the fact, that it has been preparatory and introductory to a state of things, which shall witness the consummation which God has decreed, and the regeneration of the world at large.

Soon after the first promise of mercy was given, men began to exhibit the extent of depravity to which they could go: and during a period of nearly two thousand years, God allowed the experiment to be made. (*Experiment*, I say; not as teaching any thing to Omnipotence or Omniscience, or deciding a doubt in the mind of Infinite Wisdom; but as affording important lessons to all intelligent beings.) For nearly two thousand years the experiment was tried, or permitted to be tried, how far man would go from God, to what a pitch of iniquity and pride human depravity would go if left to itself. The lengthened ages of the antediluvians, only confirmed the fact of the inveterateness of human depravity, and the awful lengths to which it will go, when God leaves it to work its own will. The follies of youth were not succeeded by the wisdom of age. Nine hundred years were not sufficient to correct their vices or to reform their lives. The longer their growth, the ranker were their weeds, till sufficient time had been allowed to prove the awful fact, and God cleansed the polluted and wicked world by the waters of the deluge.

Subsequently to this, two processes on a very grand scale, appeared to be carrying on in Judea and the Gentile world. In the land of Judea, God raised up prophets in succession, and made disclosures to them respecting the great salvation. A system of ceremonial observances was instituted, which contained the elements of Gospel truth in a figure. All these had reference to the coming salvation. "The law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ;" until, at the termination of about another two thousand years, the fulness of time was come, and "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman." During the same period another process was going on in the Gentile world. The nations that were sunk in ignorance went further and further into the depths of barbarism. But there were many favourable circumstances: civilization advanced; men appeared of the brightest genius and of the most powerful minds: science appeared to make very considerable progress; and the powers of the human mind developed themselves in the most extraordinary manner. But on all subjects relating to moral science, to man's hope and God's glory, and the supreme good of souls, they were all in the dark; they wandered in mazes of their own conjecture, in labyrinths of errors; until, after sufficient and ample scope had been allowed, until, after it had been proved that the world by wisdom knew not God, God brought his own plan into action, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe.

After the first proclamation of the Gospel, Christianity seemed rapidly to be making its way towards the throne of universal empire: but its progress was soon stopped, and it was to be shewn to the whole world, that it possessed a power and a guardianship, which shall secure it amid all the attacks of earth or hell. While it was considered a contemptible superstition, it attracted neither the attention, nor excited the concern of the mistress of the world; but as soon as its converts multiplied, and begun to assume a degree of importance, that sword was drawn at which the world had trembled; the majesty of Rome decreed the extermination of Christianity, and the sword was bathed in blood.

But not the gloomiest dungeons, nor the keenest axe, nor the more savage butcheries of the amphitheatre, could annihilate that which God intended to preserve. It was a plant of heaven; it had taken root; and God watched over it. It was the city of God, and the gates of hell could not prevail against it.

But another trial awaited it. There was another process it was necessary Christianity should pass through. It seemed as though the powers of evil had thought thus: "If Christianity possesses a vitality which nothing can destroy, is it possible that its saving power may be neutralized, and rendered powerless by foreign admixture?" After a while this awful experiment was tried to the utmost. The heathen mythology was again renewed under Christian names: Jewish ceremonies of an external nature, interwoven with Christian rites, and the spiritual kingdom of Christ was made the kingdom of this world, affording temptation (and not in vain) to power and ambition to rush into the Church of God. The Church of Christ has, ever since the Reformation, been endeavouring to shake itself from this incubus: it is still coming out of its trial, though not entirely free from it: and we now see Christianity assuming new energies, rejoicing in the prospect of a new career, as a strong man to run a race.

Such have been the processes through which Christianity has passed: such has been the grand experiment which God has made on the theatre of the world: such have been the important lessons which, it seems, Divine Wisdom thought proper to teach to all the intelligent powers in heavenly places and on earth. But though these tests have been applied, though these trials have been endured, Christianity still remains; the Church of Christ still stands, nor has the gates of hell prevailed against it. But if such has been the length of time over which these preparations have extended—if such the grandeur of the means employed—if such the extent of the plan announced—what must be the harvest that is before us? How great, how glorious, how abundant! No doubt, Christian brethren, you have sometimes, while reading the page of history, a kind of gloom pass through the mind; and a sigh of regret has escaped from your hearts while you have seen how small a portion the Church of Christ seemed to occupy on the theatre of the world. While you have seen the changes, the growth, the rise, the decay of empires, their various contentions occupying so large a space in the world's history, how small has been that space which has been assigned to the Church of Christ! Look forward to the glorious harvest; place to the eye the telescope of faith; look into distant ages which are now approaching; see the renovated world approaching the view. The Koran is exchanged for the Bible; the delusions of the false prophet are gone: and now all Europe comes within the pale of the Church; the oriental nations flock into it; a voice is heard, saying, "Open, ye gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the law may enter." See the degraded sons of Africa now wearing no yoke but that of the Saviour, rejoicing in the liberty with which Christ has made them free. Among these, see a goodly company of interesting forms, from all the nations whither they were scattered—from the East and the West, from the South and the North: they are the seed of Abraham, the friend of God. The tears starting from their eyes; they have looked on Him whom they have pierced, and mourned. Now their countenances brighten, as the voice of Hebrew melody again ascends to God—"O Lord, I will praise thee, for thou wast angry with me, but thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me." Keep your eye steady: mark succeeding ages

rolling on. All the desolations of war have ceased ; population multiplies ; the happiness of the world increases. A thousand discoveries of science, not yet known, are brought to bear on the happiness of man. Age after age rolls on, while the millennial glory bursts in upon a renovated world. And then will be fulfilled, in a manner that has never yet been realized, the language of the word of God : "The tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with men upon the earth : he is God and they shall be his people."

Such, Christian brethren, is the great harvest which we anticipate. But **HAVE WE REASON TO HOPE THAT THIS IS NEAR ?** We have ventured to say, that in our opinion, a concurrence of circumstances seems to indicate, that the time of this great harvest is at hand.

Let me, however, explain myself for a moment. When I say, *it is at hand*, I would not encourage the expectation of seeing it burst on the world in full-orbed splendour, as by stupendous miracle. I see no reason to expect that the glory will be produced by any other agency or instrumentality, than those which God has already employed, by the effusion of his Holy Spirit—by the instrumentality of his own church, when seasons, probably like those of Pentecost, shall be renewed ; and thousands, instead of solitary individuals, shall be added to the Lord in a single day. There are only two sources from which we can draw any satisfactory information on this point. The one is, a sober examination of the prophecies of God ; and the other is, a careful view of the providence of God ; and not either of these separately, but both of these combined.

Allow me, then, in the first place, to inquire, whether there is, in the *prophecies* of God, any thing which would lead us to expect that the harvest is near at hand, or that it may yet be deferred for an indefinite period, and for multiplied ages yet to come.

I am aware that so many extravagant displays have been made respecting the prophecies of God, that it may possibly be deemed presumption to dwell on such a topic. It is not, however, my intention to go into these, but just to suggest one or two things, which I think will be sufficiently plain to any one who has paid only a moderate degree of attention to the prophecies of redemption. There are only two which we shall notice as calculated to throw some light on the subject to which we have adverted. The one is recorded in Daniel, ii., and the other in Daniel, vii. They are similar to each other. The one contains the vision of the great image, representing the four monarchies that should successively arise, under the representation of four different kinds of metal : the other represents the same image under the character of four beasts. The history of them is the same. At the close of the first vision, as it is represented in Daniel, ii., we read : "In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed : and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever." And in Daniel, vii., at the close of the interpretation of that vision : "And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him."

Now, let it be observed, that several things in these prophecies have evidently been accomplished, and there are some things yet unaccomplished. Can we

arrive precisely at that period in which we stand now? The Babylonian monarchy was succeeded by the Medo-Persian ; that was succeeded by the Macedonian ; to that succeeded the Roman. These things are now matter of history ; as are also the circumstances indicated in the vision of the metallic image—the weakness arising from its extremities, being partly of iron and partly of clay, representing the weakness of the close of the Roman empire. It is equally matter of history that the ten horns which sprung out of the fourth beast correspond with the ten toes of the metallic image ; that these ten kingdoms (represented by the horns and the toes) were formed when the Roman empire was dismembered by the irruption of the northern barbarians in the fourth and fifth centuries. Further, there was “the stone cut out without hands,” that should “become a great mountain, and fill the whole earth :” which is interpreted as meaning the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have seen this kingdom arise in the land of Judea : we have marked its progress ; we have seen it rolled through by pagan persecution and papal corruption ; and, though sometimes overwhelmed, still emerging again, and proceeding anew with accelerated vigour towards the throne of the great image. These things have been accomplished : and what remains now in the image of the great vision, but that collision which shall smite the image, and cause all its materials to be separated as the chaff on the summer threshing-floor, while the stone itself shall become a great mountain, and fill the whole earth ?

But observe, I entreat you, in the corresponding vision in Daniel vii. there is an additional circumstance introduced, which occurs between the rise of these ten kingdoms and the final and universal establishment of the kingdom of Christ. “Then I would know the truth of the fourth beast, which was diverse from all the others, exceeding dreadful, whose teeth were of iron, and his nails of brass ; which devoured, brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with his feet ; and of the ten horns that were in his head, and of the other which came up, and before whom three fell : even of that horn that had eyes, and a mouth that spake very great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows. I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them : until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the Most High ; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom. Thus he said, The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces. And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise : and another shall arise after them : and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings. And he shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High.”

Now if we can ascertain the rise of this power, we have another way-mark to guide us, we have another circumstance which throws some light upon the position in which the church of Christ is now. In connexion with this let me just refer you to 2 Thessalonians ii., and you will feel no difficulty in identifying this with that “little horn” representing an arrogant power aiming at dominion, speaking even against the Most High, thinking to wear out the saints of God. The Thessalonians seem to have supposed that the coming of Christ was at hand, and, therefore, the Apostle addresses them—“Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering

together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God, sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he that now letteth, will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming." To the same power the Apostle alludes in 1 Timothy, iv. "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils," (the doctrine concerning demons;) speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth."

Can there be any doubt, for a moment, as to the power that is here identified by the words of Daniel, and of Paul to the Thessalonians and to Timothy? It is now matter of history that such a power has arisen. The fathers of the Church, when the prophecy was still future, speculated, and argued, and formed some strange notions respecting antichrist. *We* have seen a power arise, diverse from all earthly powers, claiming supreme dominion, and arrogating the power of changing times and laws, wearing out the saints of the Most High, and exhibiting the most formidable determination to persecute the people of God. How long shall this power continue? For "a time, and times, and the dividing of times." You, who are accustomed to read the prophecies, well know that this period agrees, and is exactly identified with that remarkable period so frequently mentioned of forty-two months, twelve hundred and sixty days, or three years and a half—all of them corresponding, a day being taken for a year.

This power was then to continue its domination only for a limited period, and this period is assigned by God himself to twelve hundred and sixty days. The only difficulty is in exactly fixing the point of its commencement. That I shall not attempt to do with any certainty: but while we may not rashly affirm the exact period at which this power may be said to have begun, there are data which will justify our fixing certain limits, beyond which we cannot pass. This power—let it be remembered—could not have arisen *until* the dismemberment of the western portion of the Roman empire, and its distribution in a number of kingdoms: it could not possibly be *later* than about the middle of the eighth century, for then the power obtained the full height of its dominion, had subdued several temporalities, and possessed them, usurped the title of "universal bishop," and appeared enthroned in all its supremacy and power. There are some who fix the date at the assumption of the title, just mentioned; but the latest period which is fixed—the latest period which, I think, it is possible to fix—is about the middle of the eighth century. The termination of this antichristian power would then be found to arrive early in the

twenty-first century—that is, at the distance of about two hundred years from the time at which we now are. It appears to me, there is no possible way of interpreting this prophecy which shall extend it beyond this period.

Now think of this, for a moment, Christians Are we, after so long and dreary a night, come to a period so near the morning? After the Church of God has been toiling and sowing the precious seed, and watering it even with tears, is the great result so near, that we may say, “ Lift up your eyes, and see: behold, the fields are white already to the harvest?”

But if things are approaching so rapidly to this point, we might expect that there would be some outward and visible indication of it: we might expect there would be something in the appearance of the horizon which marks the approach of day, and corresponds with that time to which the index of prophecy seems to point. Allow me, as briefly as I can, to advert to some of the indications that appear to concur with these prophecies, to show that we have not mistaken them, and that we are approaching the period of the world’s regeneration.

In the first place, we observe, that *the whole world has become accessible to missionary enterprise to a degree altogether unprecedented*; and that this appears to us a most favourable indication that better days are approaching.

You must be aware that this is a necessary condition to the regeneration of the world. “ Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” How shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they hear who live in places that are unknown, and are inaccessible to the Christian missionary? In the present day we may look abroad on the world, and see that never was there a period, when the world was accessible in so extensive a manner to the enterprise, as at the present moment. Generally, indeed, the race of man has exhibited a shattered sort of frame-work, broken and disjointed, except when united for purposes of aggression or mutual defence, or have been subjugated by some one state, and consolidated together into one mass. In Persia, indeed, we find there was a degree of communication between all her one hundred and twenty-seven provinces. And so, of course, it was when Rome existed in all its grandeur; the passage of armies, the number of ambassadors from the Metropolis to the several provinces, must have produced a certain degree of intercommunication between them: but never to the extent to which it now exists. It is delightful, Christian brethren, to see how the providence of God is overruling all the schemes of ambition, all the plans of politicians, all the discoveries of science, to forward his own purposes respecting the salvation of fallen man. A whole continent has been discovered, unknown to the ancient world, together with vast numbers of islands; not only discovered, but a degree of intercourse has been established among them: and God has overruled the spirit of commerce in such a manner, that it is bringing gradually, but continually, all the nations of the world nearer together. This spirit, whatever incidental evils may have attended it, seems to arise from the very wants and tendencies of human nature, and is called into action by those arrangements of Divine Providence, which has distributed its various bounties over different lands, and rendered all parts of the world, in a considerable measure, dependent on each other. It is owing to the spirit of commerce, that America was laid open; it is owing to this that we have extensive colonies over different parts of the globe, and that our power is established in India. It is owing to this,

that Africa has been colonized. This spirit has seized hold on all the discoveries of science. It seized upon the properties of the magnet, and made the ocean a highway for vessels to pass. It has most recently availed itself of a subtle and intangible fluid, and rendered it a substitute for animal power; and, in some degree, rendered itself, by this means, independent of the winds and the tides. And this spirit of enterprise, under the guidance of the providence of God, whatever incidental evils may attend it, is working a rapid and a mighty change throughout all the world. And such is the intercommunication now existing between nations, and the ways that are now open, that in a very short time, to all appearance, there will be no single part of the globe which will not be accessible to the Christian missionary. The eastern continent nearly all lies open, as well as the western continent; ways are opening east and west, and north and south: and Divine Providence, pointing to all these open doors, calls upon the half-awakened church, and says, "Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest."

Another favourable indication in connexion with this, is, *the commanding and influential position of those portions of the globe, where Christianity exists in its purest and most active forms.* In order that Providence should give any nation a missionary character, and qualify it to discharge missionary functions to evangelize the world, these different properties that we have mentioned are necessary. When, for instance, a nation or people may, if Christianity exist among them, possess it only as a lifeless form, as a thing of state expediency, inert and ineffectual in its operations, it has neither motive nor means to evangelize the world. And though religion may exist in a nation, in a pure and active form, yet if it be but feeble in its resources, limited in its connexions, dependent in its condition, it is but little qualified to extend the triumphs of Christianity. I may be referred, probably, to the period of the first triumphs of Christianity, when from Judea, a poor, and feeble, and dependent province, it worked its way forward and upward, till it seated itself in the very midst of imperial Rome. But remember, Judea was then a province of the Roman empire: had Rome been in a state of actual hostility to Judea, the case of Christianity then, in all probability, would have been different. And as soon as Christianity became of sufficient importance to attract its attention, persecution began, and it remained to be proved, that the Church was as a beacon, burning with fire, but not consumed. But if the Church had such power, such energy, to withstand those trials, what will be its power and energy, when, freed from those trials, it shall be said to it, "An open door is set before thee, and no man can shut it?" when God shall be in the midst of his Church, not merely to sustain it under trial, but to inspire it with a holy energy, to awaken all its ardour, and to send it forward to all the nations, to subdue men to the obedience of the faith? And this is the vocation of the Church in the times in which we live; and these are the prospects which God has for it.

And is it not one indication that such a delightful change approaches, that Christianity sheds her brightest and holiest light, and operates with her most powerful energies, exactly in those nations of the earth which are the most adapted to extend her triumphs, and to assist in the universal dissemination of the Gospel. Are not Great Britain and America raised to the commanding station which they now occupy, and invested with all the powers they now possess, for purposes more important than politician ever thought of, or greater

consequences to the world's happiness than men generally think? Look at England, with her colonies in almost every part of the globe: her natural language has become almost the universal language of commerce. Look at her extensive connexions; her ships crossing the sea in every direction. Look at America, evidently destined by Divine Providence as the co-worker with Great Britain in this holy cause: look on these things, and connect them with the diminished power of those states that were likely to obstruct the Gospel: look at the crumbling power of the Ottoman States: look at the diminished power, for instance, of the Papal States: look at the increased power of England and America, and the means which they possess of extending Christianity far and wide—and will it not be an indication that God designs better things for the world than it has ever yet seen?

And let it be remembered, that with these two nations—notwithstanding all the formality and pride that we lament, and over which we daily mourn—there is a vital power in Christianity, and it is ever at work. Look at the instrumentality that is employed; the places of worship that are spread over the land; I say, combine these two circumstances, the commanding and influential position of these nations, and the energy with which Christianity is working there; and see if it will not concur with the indications above referred to, that we are approaching a better state of things, and that the great harvest is at hand.

May I just intimate also, that *the general spread of knowledge, and the extension of education*, are favourable to the spread of Christianity. Whether it be for evil or for good, knowledge is proceeding with a pace and a power that nothing human can withstand; nothing can arrest its progress. We see it in every form, from the portly folio to the penny tract. The impulse which is felt at home is even conveyed to foreign nations: it is spreading, it will spread, and we rejoice in its spread. There are those who tremble with dismay at the extension of knowledge; who see before them visions dark and gloomy, and spectres the most terrific. We tremble not, whatever collision there may be: the human mind was not made for ignorance: it is no atmosphere for happiness to breathe; it is no element for purity to live in; it is a libel on Him who is the fountain of all knowledge to advocate ignorance. We admit, indeed, that the communication of knowledge is not the impartation of religion; that learning will not change the heart, and that knowledge alone may leave men infidels. But learning is an atmosphere through which Christianity may shine. Learning, knowledge, education, may all be auxiliary to the spread of Christianity. Look at it now: not only in England, but in all China, the press is at work, in every shape. And who that can consider the importance of this, but must rejoice in the happy omen which it affords, that we are arriving at a better period of the world's history, and that the goodly harvest is at hand?

But lastly: *what has been already achieved* is also a most favourable and delightful indication. We mention this not as already realizing the hopes, and meeting the expectations of the Church, but as of such a nature, and character, and extent, as to justify the largest expectations of the future. Attacks have been made in our times from various points, and on some of the most important positions: impressions have been made where this kingdom was thought invulnerable. It has been said by historian after historian, that the

Hottentot of Southern Africa was sunk into such a state of intellectual debasement, that for a long period civilization must prepare them before Christianity can be communicated. Let Bethelsdorp answer, and the churches of peaceful, civilized Hottentots which have been formed there. Then our missionaries went to the savages of the Southern Sea, where the great circumnavigator fell, and it was considered as folly and fanaticism to make there such an attempt: and there Christianity has not only received the homage of these lands, but has actually moulded their civil institutions. Our missionaries went to India, and in the British Parliament legislators could rise and denounce these apostates from the anvil and the loom, who with their wild fanatical extravagance attempted to make converts from those whose national prejudices would defeat, and national usages would render altogether impracticable: and yet caste has been broken, Bramins have preached the Gospel, and died rejoicing in the faith of Christ. And even China, with her jealous policy, and almost impracticable language—even China has proved not to be impregnable to the Gospel. And it was said by our physiologists and our anatomists, in the wisdom of their philosophy, that the very formation of the Negro skull indicated a physical impossibility to be elevated in Christian society. We point to the thousands and tens of thousands that are now in the West India Islands, receiving the word with joy, and who pant for instruction, for religious instruction, beyond what British benevolence has ever yet afforded. We look to India, and there see, not only the Bramin believing; but, even contrary to national usages, contrary to the prejudices of ages, even the Hindoo female receiving the blessings of education and of Christianity. The Hindoo wife has been saved from the burning pile, the Hindoo mother from the destruction of her offspring, and the Hindoo daughter from ignorance—by receiving the blessings of education.

But all that has been done we consider merely as preparatory; and we rejoice in it principally as only bearing testimony to this fact, that there is no power with which Christianity has come into contact, over which it cannot triumph, and which it cannot destroy. Look at every part of the world where Christianity has been faithfully, where the Gospel has been perseveringly preached; where it has come into contact with superstition and idolatry, and has had its triumphs. See the Hindoo, and the fierce Malay, and the active and artful Chinese, as well as the unintellectual Hottentot, the restless and independent savage of the American forest, and the pliant and docile Negro of the West Indies—all have found the Gospel to be “the power of God to salvation to them that believe.” Every form of error and superstition has been giving way. The Pagan, the Mahometan, the Papist, renouncing their particularities, all sit down at the table of the Lord: and men of all colours, from the deeply-tinged Ethiopian black, to the fairest and ruddiest European, have been calling upon God, and bowing at the throne of grace, and hymning the praises of our great and glorious Redeemer. Every missionary station is an advanced post from which an attack can be made on the enemy: every school is a centre of light, from which the rays of truth may proceed. Every translation opens a fountain of living water to all the inhabitants of the nations that can read it. Look at the number of translations effected by our own indefatigable missionaries, and the number of Bibles that have been circulated, and the innumerable tracts that have been sent forth with some portion of

Christian truth ; look at the liberty of instruction ; look at the apparatus of means provided, and now in actual operation ; compare them with what has been accomplished within the last forty or fifty years ; and if they go on in the same ratio of progression, and if the blessing of heaven descend on us in answer to our prayers, what a mighty change will be produced upon the world in the course of another century ! Are not these, Christian brethren, considering all these indications in connexion with the prophecy of God—is there not such a concurrence as should inspire every hope, and cheer us on to vigorous efforts, and impress our minds with the certain conviction, that we must now gird up ourselves for efficient labour, for the harvest is at hand ?

Allow me, in the next place, briefly to suggest, THE SENTIMENTS AND CONDUCT WITH WHICH THIS STATE OF THINGS SHOULD BE MET BY THE CHURCH OF CHRIST. That it should be met by corresponding sentiments and conduct we all must admit. But what are the sentiments and the conduct with which they should be met ?

In the first place, I would say, *with attention*. When God works, it becomes us to contemplate his works. Has he spread before us the wonders and mysteries of the universe, and given to us rational faculties, that we might be careless spectators ? And why should we look with less interest on the ways of Divine Providence, than on the works of nature ? He whose energy pervades the material universe, working all its changes, and producing all its phenomena, presides over the intellectual and moral world, directing and controlling all things for the advancement of his own glory, and the extension of the kingdom of Christ. With all the stupendous works of glory before our view, in nature, shall we allow our faculties to remain dormant, or turn our view from them ? And when God is causing such wonders to pass before us in the revolutions and purposes of his providence, as are now passing in the world, does it become us as Christians, to behold them as careless spectators ? Look on the world, look on the aspect of the world ; not with the eye of the tradesman, calculating the probabilities of gaining or losing, prosperity or adversity in the things that perish with the using ; but look on them as events which are approaching, with changes bearing upon the happiness of man and on the glory of God in an extraordinary degree. Look at what is now passing in the world, not with the eye of the politician, nor, with the fear of being thought too deep a legislator, pass by the observation of those great changes which are destined to bring about that crisis to which our thoughts are now directed. When God speaks, it is for us to hear ; when God works, it is for us to attend.

It should also be met *with thankfulness*. “Blessed are our eyes for they see, and our ears for they hear,” what would have filled the hearts of our forefathers with joy and with gratitude. If we could suppose some blessed spirit from the distant world, who had lived in the period when the northern barbarians swept over the whole of Europe, like the locusts coming out of the bottomless pit, and when every thing bright and beautiful was scorched by them, when the voice of the destroying angel was heard “Woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth,” and all the glory of Christianity was obscured—if we could suppose some spirit now to visit this world from the mansions of glory, what would be his surprise and joy at the present condition of the church and the prospects opening before us ! Or were we to look over a later period, the

commencement of the Reformation, at that point when the instant (in any of its valleys) it began to appear it was destroyed by those infernal crusades. Or if we consider the time of the last of the Stuarts in England, when the last spark of liberty was endeavoured to be extinguished in blood ; and the pilgrim fathers hung their harps upon the willow in a foreign land ; or if you go no further back than the period of the French Revolution, covering the heavens with pitchy darkness, and “ the sea and the waves were roaring, and men’s hearts failing them for fear ”—and what is come to pass ? If we look at these things, and compare them with the present, we shall find ourselves under the deepest obligations of thankfulness and gratitude to God. Then in the Church we had nothing but prophecy, now we have Providence as well as prophecy to comfort us. Then the cry was continually in the Church, “ Watchman what of the night, watchman what of the night ? ” now we are enabled to answer, “ The night is far spent, and the day is at hand.” “ Bless the Lord, O our souls, and all that is within us bless his holy name.”

It should be met, Christian friends, *by the most zealous efforts*. There is a time to stand still and see the salvation of our God, and there is a time when we are called on to go forward. Every age of the Church has its appropriate test. Our fathers were put to the test of support and attachment to the Saviour’s cause by the trials which attended them. They were called by their patience and fortitude in suffering to shew their attachment to the Saviour : you are called to a trial of another kind ; to prove by your active and zealous efforts, your attachment to the Saviour’s cause. Our test is of a more pleasant, but not of a less necessary character. And allow me to say, my Christian friends, that the man who will not make a sacrifice of time, and labour, and property, when opportunities for exertion are afforded to him, would suffer but little for conscience’ sake in times of trial and distress. God does not call on you to take joyfully the spoiling of your goods, he did upon your fathers : he calls on you to give a portion of your substance for the advancement of his cause. He does not call on you to suffer yourselves ; to be immured in dungeons in defence of the truth ; but you have liberty, that you may employ your personal, active efforts in his cause. He does not call on you to go to the martyr’s stake ; but he does call on you to consecrate yourselves, and all that you have, to him, a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God. Ministers of the gospel, he calls on you at such a peculiar crisis as this, with all your soul and energy to call forth the Church, to awaken them to a sense of their duty, and to lead the van. You that have wealth, he calls on you, not to accumulate, but to distribute. This is a time when your wealth may be employed to the best possible advantage, when it may be turned to the best account. And after all that he has done for you, will you do but little for him ?

Christians of every age, and every rank and sex, opportunities are offering to you : let every one be at his post, and let the most zealous efforts carry forward the cause of Christ, by that instrumentality which God waits to bless.

Finally, *steady perseverance* is demanded at the present crisis. Let not your zeal be the flash of excitement, but the glow of principle : let it not be the passing brilliance of the meteor, but like the sun that “ shineth brighter and brighter unto the perfect day.” Do not fall into the error of expecting too rapid results : and do not imagine on the other hand that all is retrograding when you see some of your plans fail, and some of your efforts not

successful. Be assured of this, the cause must succeed: the zeal of the Lord of hosts will carry it forward. Be it therefore your aim to be found each steadily and perseveringly pressing onward and onward in the great work, relaxing no effort after any failure, but only renewing our exertions: after any success only doubling our efforts: and then whatever portion of success we may achieve in this great and holy cause during our pilgrimage, may we be enabled at last, when we are called to quit this scene, to say, "I have fought a good fight:" and graciously and condescendingly may we hear the Saviour's voice responding "Well done good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

## CHRIST OUR ADVOCATE.

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REV. JAMES WILLIAMS A.B.

ST. ANNE'S CHURCH, LIMEHOUSE, MAY 31 1895

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If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And He is the propitiation for our sins."—1 JOHN, ii. 1, 2.

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WHEN the children of Israel were engaged in battle with Amalek they were strengthened and encouraged, amid the heat and severity of the conflict, by the sight of Moses, who stood on an adjacent mountain with hands uplifted in supplication to God for their success and victory. Christians, while traversing the wilderness of life, have to maintain an unceasing warfare with enemies numerous, powerful, and subtle. Whither, brethren, shall we look in the hour of assault and danger for aid and protection? Whither, but to those holy and everlasting hills to which our glorified Redeemer has ascended to plead our cause and make intercession for us? Were the prayers of Moses—a fallen, sinful creature like ourselves—accepted in behalf of the Israelites, and shall not the pleading of Jesus have power with God and prevail? Were they animated by a remembrance of his intercession, and shall a disciple of Christ faint and be weary, when an Almighty and Ever-living Saviour has left upon record that precious promise—"I will pray the Father for you?" "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again—who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." The look of faith, and the cry of prayer to Christ exalted to his heavenly throne, can never fail to inspire the heart with confidence in temptation's darkest hour.

But there are some seasons when the Christian finds it difficult, perhaps impossible, to exercise either faith or prayer: I mean when through infirmity he has fallen into sin. For then Satan instantly tempts the soul to despair: he represents this partial failure as an evidence that there is not, and never was, any true grace in the heart, but that the man has been all along deceiving himself: he will use his utmost efforts to keep the soul from returning to God, its rest, by whispering that it is all in vain, that our case is hopeless, that the immortal crown is forfeited for ever. "Thou shalt surely die," says the tempter. Now this is precisely the case supposed in the text: "If any man sin we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and He is the propitiation for our sins."

Let us consider, first, our danger; and secondly, our security.

We are every moment prone to transgression. It is admitted, indeed, that

he who abideth in Christ sinneth not. So long as we look unto Jesus we are safe ; for while the soul hangeth upon him, his right hand upholdeth it. The prayer of faith renders the feeblest saint invulnerable. But alas ! we are not always watching unto prayer : the merest trifle is often sufficient to divert us from the exercise of dependence on a Saviour's power and love ; and then it is that the enemy comes in hastily " like a flood," and finds us weak and incapable of resistance. He obtains the mastery, so far as to involve us in the transgression of some known commandment, and then he is unwearied in his efforts to follow up the advantage he has gained. " If any man sin"—the matter ends not there. The successful emissary of the Prince of Darkness, flushed with the victory he has won, conveys the tidings to the gates of hell, and thence again the report is carried, with malignant triumph, to the courts of heaven, where the crime, with all its aggravations, is importunately urged, as affording just occasion for the condemnation of the sinner. The indictment is publicly preferred, the inconsistency of our lives is alleged as a proof of the insincerity of our professions, the defectiveness of our works is objected to the reality of our faith, and the accuser, maintaining upon this ground that we are not Christ's, demands, from the justice of God, that sentence be forthwith pronounced upon us, and that we be delivered over to the punishment which our sins have righteously deserved. O, my brethren, could we but take a survey of all the consequences to which every act of transgression on our part, gives birth in the unseen world, we should feel a force in these words of the Apostle, " If any man sin"—which would prepare our hearts to contemplate with admiring gratitude, the provision which, even in such a case, is made for

#### OUR SECURITY. " We have an Advocate with the Father."

The law of God doth not condemn any man before it hears him ; and as the accused cannot appear in the court of heaven to answer for themselves, they are heard there in the person of their Advocate. And who is this that appears to meet the charge, to rebuke Satan, and to deliver the sinner from his grasp ? It is Jesus, who is engaged on behalf of his people, to confront their accuser. The sinner is convicted, his guilt is established, justice is about to take its course, when lo ! an Advocate, " one like unto the Son of God," appears and claims the sinner for his own. " Is he not one for whom I laid down my life ? Is he not given to me of my Father ? Have I not purchased him with my own blood ? Have I not made an atonement and fulfilled all righteousness for him ? I demand his acquittal by virtue of my full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice offered upon Mount Calvary, and accepted by my Father. I have loved him with an everlasting love. He is mine. This is a brand plucked out of the fire !"

O, what an antidote have we here to the despondency of an awakened, guilty conscience ! My Christian brethren, whenever you are conscious of any particular deviation from the path of duty, fly at once to the fountain ever open for sin and uncleanness. Prostrate yourselves before him who, as a merciful and faithful High Priest, espouses the cause of the trembling suppliant. Say, " Lord I am oppressed, undertake for me," and Jesus shall become your " Advocate with the Father." How encouraging it is to reflect, that he sitteth upon the mercy-seat to receive the prayers of his people, and that every petition which they lay before him he adopts and presents to the throne of God as his

own request! Well might the Apostle say, " Seeing then that we have a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not a High Priest that cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need!"

But the Christian's security will be yet further evident if you consider, that the qualifications of his Advocate are such as cannot fail to insure success. There are three qualifications requisite to constitute a powerful and successful advocate.

The first is *zeal*. If your property, your reputation, or your life were at stake, whom would you employ to plead your cause? Certainly not your enemy; nor yet one whom you even suspected of indifference to your interests. Every man who has a matter before a judge, will try to procure an advocate who is zealously affected in his favour; under the just conviction, that without some measure of zeal, his cause, humanly speaking, will be lost. Where, in this respect, will you find an advocate so admirably qualified for his office as our blessed Saviour? Think, my brethren, of his love to your souls—how free! Without waiting to be solicited, "without money and without price," he stood forward as our Surety, to arrest the arm of justice, just as it was lifted up for our destruction. Then it was that "he looked and there was no man, and he wondered that there was none to redeem; therefore his own arm brought salvation." Consider, too, at how great a price he purchased our deliverance from a state of guilt and condemnation: "He redeemed us to God by his blood." And will he not value that for which he has paid so dear? Will he not plead for that for which he agonized and died? What if you had spent a long life in acquiring a property, would you be willing to have it wrested from you? What if you had expended all your money in the purchase of an estate, would you quietly submit to be deprived of it? Nay, if the lives of your best loved friends, or of the children of your bosom were in danger, could you hold your peace? No, the fire would kindle, love would make you eloquent, it would fill your mouth with arguments. O, then, my brethren, think of the love of Jesus: think of the relation in which he stands to you. It is your Shepherd, your Friend, your Brother, your Husband, who is your Advocate with the Father. How, then, can he be otherwise than zealously affected in your cause? If you knew that the power to grant your desires, to answer your prayers, were vested in the hand of some warm-hearted, earthly friend, you would assure yourself that you had only to ask in order to receive. O, why should not this assurance be multiplied a thousand times with respect to Christ? Where is the earthly friend willing to die for you? Where is the fellow mortal, however beloved, who is not subject to caprice and change? But here is "a friend that loveth at all times"—a friend who "has commended his love towards you in that while you were yet sinners" he gave himself to suffering and death for your sake. Then be not faithless but believing.

But there is another qualification for the work of an advocate no less necessary than *zeal*: I mean,

*Secondly, wisdom.* Indeed the most ardent affection, if it be not regulated and controlled by a sound judgment, will commonly prove injurious to the cause which it endeavours to support. As the ability of a general consists much in

the skill with which he chooses his position and disposes of his troops, so an advocate has need of wisdom to direct him in selecting the ground on which he may, with most advantage to his client, stand up in his defence. What consummate wisdom did Moses display in pleading the cause of Israel on that memorable occasion "when they made a calf in Horeb, and worshipped the golden image." - "Let me alone," said Jehovah, "that I may consume them in a moment." "But Moses besought the Lord his God." He pleaded his past mercies, the honour of His own great Name, his promise to Abraham and his seed; and the plea was irresistible: "The Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people, and he did it not." But in the text we have one greater than Moses, even Him in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. When pleading on the cross for the pardon of his murderers, with what judicious dexterity did Jesus avail himself of the only extenuating circumstance which their case admitted: "Father, forgive them, for they *know not* what they do." And is it possible that he should be at a loss for arguments as the Advocate of his brethren and his friends? "Father," he will say, "these have fled for refuge to the sanctuary of my cross. They have appeared before the throne of grace and there confessed their sin. They have committed their cause into my hands. Though their feet have slipped, their faith does not fail: they still trust in me, and thou hast promised that such shall never be confounded. I own them as my disciples; I confess them before thee and the holy angels; I claim for them the benefit of my cross and passion. Be thou merciful to their transgressions and remember their sins no more."

But this leads me to remark, that in order to preclude all possibility of failure, there is one more qualification requisite in an advocate; and that is,

Thirdly, *merit*. The intercession of one who has a claim upon the person with whom he pleads, partakes of the nature of a command. It has a force which is irresistible. Had you a favour to solicit of the government of your country, had you to move the clemency of the Sovereign on behalf of some poor convict who, by the transgression of the law, had incurred the penalty of death, whom could you employ to carry a petition to the throne with so much probability of success as some faithful servant of the crown, whose time and talents had been entirely devoted to the service of his royal master; or some veteran soldier who had spilled his blood and jeopardised his life in leading forth the armies of his country to the conquest of her enemies? By securing the offices of such an advocate at court, you would be involving the honour of the crown in the result of the application.

It is recorded of two brothers, *Æschylus* and *Amynias*, who dwelt at Athens, that the former, having been accused of impiety by his countrymen, was condemned to be put to death. But in the moment when he was about to be led to execution, the latter, who had lost his right hand in the battle of Salamis, an occasion on which he had been signally instrumental in contributing to the success of the Athenian arms, suddenly presented himself before the judges, and drawing his wounded limb from beneath his cloak, exhibited it to their view. The remembrance of his important services was revived in the minds of the spectators; his claims upon the state were felt; and the silent eloquence of his wounds so powerfully affected the judges, that, in consideration of the exploits that *Amynias* had performed, and the sufferings which he had endured in fighting the battles of his country, they revoked their

decree, and pardoned the offence of *Æschylus*, whose life had been forfeited to the law.

This narrative has not been unfrequently applied to the subject now before us; and though the intercession of Christ has no perfect parallel, yet it shews the efficacy of merit in an advocate to procure the remission of punishment to a criminal. It is to this peculiar qualification of our Advocate with the Father, that the Apostle expressly directs our attention in the words of the text. He teaches us to infer our security from the consideration that our cause is in the hands of "Jesus Christ *the righteous*," who is "the propitiation for our sins." And what stronger security can we desire? If Jesus appear in the presence of God with his own blood for us—if he plead on our behalf his obedience unto death, the sacrifice which he has offered, and the everlasting righteousness which he has fulfilled, the justice and the truth, no less than the long-suffering and goodness of God, combine to insure to us the inestimable blessing of "redemption through the blood of Jesus, even the forgiveness of sins."

In conclusion: first, the text affords *no place for presumption*. An impenitent and unbelieving sinner has no authority from these words, or indeed from any other passage of Scripture, to infer that the intercession of Jesus Christ will be employed for the purpose of procuring him impunity in his transgressions, salvation in his sins. In one sense, indeed, he is the Advocate of all. Even the unconverted, those who are cumberers of the ground, are spared yet another and another year at his request. The time of their visitation is lengthened out, the sun of their mortal day stands still, the approach of that night in which no man can work is retarded by the power of his prevailing prayers on their behalf.

Brethren, have you ever considered this miracle of mercy—God's patience? When you reflect on his holy hatred of sin, his knowledge of every offender, his ability instantly to crush the sinner—when from the radiance of perfect purity he looks down upon this world, and beholds the wide spread of ungodliness, the wrong, the hypocrisy, the falsehood, the blasphemy, the licentiousness which characterize the large proportion of mankind—how astonishing is it that such wickedness is so long borne with, how wonderful that the righteous retribution of heaven should be deferred! The reason is this—He who died for these men, he who loved them so as to pour forth his life's blood for them, is still touched with a feeling of human infirmity. Jesus is on the throne; Jesus, who has made it a righteous thing with God to bear with sinners. This is the secret of God's patience. No blow can be struck but as Christ strikes it, and the feeling of his heart arrests the weight of his hand. "He is not slack concerning his promises," or concerning his threatenings, "as some men count slackness, but he is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." The feelings of his soul yearn over us in love; He is righteous indeed to strike at last, and such outraged love must surely provoke an awful stroke. O sinner! beware. The hour hastens when mercy will no longer lift up her shield to protect you from the vengeful weapons of indignation, and then the remembrance of love despised, and long-suffering exhausted, will be one of the bitterest ingredients in your cup of woe. O that the goodness of God may now lead you to repentance—before "he shall swear in his wrath that you shall never enter into his rest."

Secondly, the text leaves *no room for despair*. Let the blessed truth, that we have an Advocate with the Father, who is the propitiation for our sins, be distinctly understood and cordially believed, and then, under whatever consciousness of guilt, we may draw nigh to God, we may be sure that the Father will be just to his beloved Son, to forgive us all the debt for the sake of his all-sufficient atonement, and faithful to his covenant engagements, to hear the intercession of Jesus on our behalf. While he was yet on earth, "he lifted up his eyes and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me, and I know that thou hearest me always!" Can he say less now that he is in heaven? Or can his prayers have lost their efficacy by his exaltation to the throne of God? My brethren, "believe in God, believe also in Christ"—the justice of the Father combines with the mercy of the Son to demand your confidence. Let not a sense of your unworthiness induce you to doubt for a moment of the success of your application to the throne of grace, but remembering that your Advocate is "Jesus Christ the righteous," and that "he is the propitiation for your sins," carry your respective causes to him in the full assurance of faith and as you put them into his hands, say with Martha, "I know that even now whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee."

But you inquire, perhaps, will Jesus undertake the cause of every one who flies to him for succour? Is he as willing as he is able to save those who come unto God by him? Is it still true of this man that he receiveth sinners? Is he indeed their friend, and will he lend them his aid? Put him to the test. Come unto God by him—draw near with faith, and ere long you shall know by experience the truth of that precious promise, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." For "he will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter that he may abide with you for ever." And, "when he, the Spirit of truth, is come," he will assure your hearts, not only that "your Redeemer liveth," but that he liveth purposely and effectually "to make intercession for you."

THE GLORY TO GOD FROM THE CONFESSION OF SIN.

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" Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and, while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness."—JEREMIAH, xiii. 16.

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WE scarcely need observe, as the fact is too obvious to be easily overlooked, that the Infinite, glorious as he is in himself, can gather no accessions of glory from the contributions of his creatures. We are not at liberty to doubt, that whilst alone in the universe God was to the full as glorious as when he had surrounded himself with a multiform and dependent population. But the glory which is incapable of increase may be manifested in various degrees, and may be therefore spoken of as greater or less, in proportion as it is displayed and recognized. We are taught that the chief end of man is the glory of the Almighty: we do not suppose, as we have already intimated, that, either by creation or redemption, God can be made essentially more glorious; but only that creation or redemption are channels through which God exhibits his magnificent attributes; and thus shewing his glory may be spoken of as actually glorified.

We wish, at the outset of our inquiry, to lay down this unquestionable truth, that the glory of the Creator must be strictly independent of the contributions of the creature; so that whatever the sense in which the creature glorifies the Creator, it is not that we would represent finite beings as either adding to, or abstracting from, what is in its own nature infinite and unchangeable. But the summons of our text is undoubtedly a summons to repentance. The prophet having dwelt much on impending judgments, but still, as knowing those judgments might be averted, determines once more to try remonstrance and entreaty. The time fast approached when God, for their idolatry and profligacy, would give the Jews into the hands of the Chaldeans. The ungrateful and infidel nation flattered themselves, indeed, notwithstanding the ominous aspect of public affairs, that the city would maintain its ground against the enemy, that its footing would be secure, and that the cloud which overhung it would be quickly dispersed. Though almost at the base of the dark mountains, the captive Jews still thought they should walk the territory of independence and freedom: though the shadows of midnight were gathering fast around them, they expected the day-light would both continue and strengthen. Hence the prophet, well aware at once of their hope and its delusiveness,

\* On behalf of the St. Ann's Society Schools.

exhorts them most pathetically to amendment of life, as the alone mode of removing the calamity, and beseeches them to give heed to what the Lord God had spoken, whilst there was yet a space between themselves and the dreary hills of calamity. It was not yet too late ; their feet had not yet stumbled on the rough district of national disaster and trouble. Let them give glory to God, by confession of sin, by reformation of conduct, by a steady endeavour to yield obedience to the Lord ; and the enemy should never prevail to their overthrow, and they should never be wanderers on the dark mountains, and the twilight in which they were already enveloped, should be that which waxes into day-break, and not that which wanes into midnight.

It thus appears evident, and upon this point we wish to fasten your attention, that the giving glory to God is used in our text as a synonymous expression with the repenting of sin, and with the reforming of life. We are persuaded you cannot examine with any carefulness the words of the passage, and fail to perceive that repentance is the duty which Jeremiah inculcates, and which if performed is to secure exemption from trouble near at hand. And when you have determined that the enjoined duty must be repentance, you are to observe it is defined as the giving glory to God : and thus connecting the duty with the definition, you reach the conclusion which we are anxious to examine, as affording a basis for that appeal which we have this day undertaken to make to your benevolence ; namely, the conclusion, that thoroughly to repent is to give glory to God in the sense in which alone, as already declared, the Creator can be glorified by the creature.

In order, therefore, that we may compare the fair meaning of our text, and at the same time make way for a statement of the claims of that admirable institution of which I appear as the advocate, we will consider, in the first place, why to repent is to give glory to God ; and examine, in the second place, the truths involved in the direction, that we give this glory to God “ before our feet stumble upon the dark mountains.”

Now, that repentance which is demanded of us in Scripture differs widely, as we may suppose you are aware, from the mere transient regret at having done wrong, and the passing resolve, made in our own strength, that we will abstain for the future from certain grosser and more flagrant misdoings. The repentance that conducts to salvation is nothing less than the thorough homage of the whole man, commencing with new views of the nature of sin, and its character as committed against a God of unbounded loving-kindness, and gradually overspreading the life and conversation, till all around may recognize that fresh creation which attests undeniably the divine interference. It would not be difficult to resolve this repentance into sundry constituent elements, and to shew under each that it yields glory to God. We must, however, content ourselves with taking two of the more prominent and broadly defined, and proving that so far they cause that in repenting man glorifies his Maker. We select the sense which a true penitent has of the evil of sin, and the confession, as well by action as by words, which that sense will dictate.

There is nothing which more strikingly distinguishes man in his natural state from man in his renewed state, than the difference in the estimates formed respectively of sin. The wonder of the natural man is, why sin should be

everlastingly punished ; the wonder of the *renewed* man is, how a thing so heinous can ever find pardon. Unless the heart be in some degree the subject of those renovating operations, through which the Spirit of God restores the image which the first Adam lost, there is nothing which approaches to discernment of the infinite dishonour done by sin to the Almighty, and the consequent ruin which it deservedly fastens on man. We are quite sure that where there is freedom from actual infidelity—so that unconverted men assent to the fact, because matter of revelation, that the sin, even of a word or a thought, incurs eternal condemnation—there is the very strongest disposition to set down the fact as altogether unaccountable, and at least the secret, if not avowed inclination, to arraign the fairness of the dealing which apportions so heavy a doom to so light and transient an offence. There is no discovered proportion, but, on the contrary, a supposed vast disproportion, between the wrong done and the punishment awarded ; so that where there is not the hardihood to avouch, there will be at least the passive entertainment of the sentiment, that God would be unrighteous in taking the vengeance that he determines.

But it is a widely different view which that man takes of sin within whose breast is excited the sorrow that worketh repentance. Almost the first truth that is apprehended by the mind when stirred by its native energy alone, is, that God would maintain the principles of the most rigid justice if he gave over body and soul everlasting to torment. The gaze even of sin, yea of the very lightest and least heeded, striking as it were against every attribute of God, would convince us of this ; and where can be the marvel, that in the reboun' it should come down as vengeance which must sweep away the perpetrator ? And if it be one of the earliest symptoms of genuine repentance, that there is entertained a sense of sin, as so dishonouring to God that it deserves unlimited punishment, there can be no difficulty in making good the identity between repentance and glorifying God. You must at once perceive, that to view sin in its true light, is to recognize the perfect justice of God in punishing, and his unbounded love in pardoning. Had there been no arrangement made on behalf of the fallen, so that the whole world were abandoned to the second and ever-during death, the thorough equity of the procedure would be felt and acknowledged by the man taught the evil nature of sin. But when informed that, as the result of the Mediator's interference, God can now be just and yet the justifier, his newly-acquired feelings as to what sin is and what sin deserves, will cause him to be overwhelmed with amazement and admiration. For, of course, in exact proportion that he observes and discerns the dislhonour which sin does to God, will be his amazement that the sinner can be received back to favour. You have only, therefore, to contrast the different views which the obdurate man and the impenitent entertain of sin, as doing despite to the Almighty, and you cannot put from you the conclusion, that to summon men to repentance is to summon them to give glory to God. Let a man stand forth on the broad platform of creation, and take the survey of the evil introduced by human apostacy ; let him examine, moreover, the disclosures which have been made to us of the future, the accounts furnished by inspired writers of allotments which must hereafter be entered upon ; and we are

bound to say, that as the retinue of death and disaster wheel rapidly around and he marks the mildew which is upon all the loveliness of earth, and observes how a worm gnaws at the root of whatever is fairest and most cherished, and then remembers, that if Scripture be true, a single act of disobedience, committed long ages back, entailed the blight and the misery, and fastened on human nature its heritage of woe—why we are bold to say of him, that hard thoughts of God will present themselves to his mind, and that at least he will leave it as an inexplicable problem, that in simply eating the forbidden fruit Adam should have thrown ruin among the unnumbered millions of his posterity. Thus God, so to speak, is dishonoured, an injurious suspicion being cast on the righteousness of his dealings with this our race.

And when from the *present* we advance to the *future*, and observe the alleged consequences of transgression extending themselves like lines of fire through all the spreadings of man's after existence, the stranger to repentance will be sensible of that recoil and jar of feeling which indicate the want of suspected equity in the procedure, or which at least marks a difficulty in reconciling this fearful abandonment of the creature with that yearning loving-kindness which we ought always to ascribe to the Creator; the presumed inconsistency between his actions and his attributes, being just the boldest accusation, which, whether openly or tacitly, can be advanced by the finite against the Infinite. If the sentiments excited in the unrenewed by the consequences, whether present or future, of sin, be dishonouring to God, it will necessarily follow that if just opposite sentiments be excited in the penitent man, they will give glory to God: and as assuredly as he has gazed on the results of disobedience, the man, stricken with a sense of the evil of sin, will give harbourage to feelings exactly the reverse of those cherished in the unconverted heart. He will not marvel that the might, and the beauty, and the happiness of human kind should have been dislocated and marred by Adam's transgression; for in that transgression he views the broken commandment and to speak of a trifling offence when the precept is divine, seems to him like speaking of a palpable impossibility; to insult, and yet the insult be other than heinous, being, as he imagines, to strike simultaneously against every point of the universe, and yet produce none but an inconsiderable result. He will see nothing at variance with the high attributes of God in the sentence of the hardened and impenitent, of the worm that never dieth; for he beholds in Deity a righteous Governor as well as a compassionate Father: therefore he feels that any doing away with the sternness of the retributive economy, would be shaking the pillars on which the throne of the Most High was fixed; or rather abstracting from the Most High himself those very characteristics which make him what he is—the fountain of light and life and love to every district of the crowded immensity, the pattern and upholder of holiness in every department of the unlimited empire.

And thus his sentiments with regard to the consequences, whether present or future, of sin, are the exact opposites to those, which, entertained by the renewed man, are so clearly dishonouring to God. God appears righteous in taking vengeance: this is the discovery, the unhesitating conviction of the individual, in whose mind are the workings of genuine repentance. And if it be true, according to these shewings, that to summon a man to repent is to

exhort him to pass from the condition in which his notions of sin obscure all God's dealings, to one in which they illustrate those dealings—from the entertainment of the suspicion that the Creator may do wrong, to entertain the assurance that the Creator does right in exacting everlasting penalties ; if this be true—and if further it be true, that he gives God glory who discovers and confesses him glorious in those very awardments which, to the mass of mankind, cause him to wear the aspect of a harsh, if not an unjust avenger ; it is then clear to a demonstration, that repentance, as including a right sense of sin, must be identical with the glorifying God. And well, therefore, may the prophet, longing to bring a rebellious people to see and acknowledge the error of their ways, pour forth this as his exhortation—“ Give glory to the Lord your God, before your feet stumble on the dark mountains, and, while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness.”

But we have yet to speak of *confession as well by action as by word*, which the true penitent will make of his sin, and to show you that such confession gives glory to God. There is a remarkable instance in Holy Writ of this identity of the confession of sin, and the giving glory to God. You will remember that when the Israelites, under Joshua, had overthrown Jericho, Achan took of “the accursed thing,” and the anger of the Lord was kindled against the congregation. The strictest commands had been given that the people should abstain from touching the spoil of the city, and the sternest threatenings uttered, that disobedience would bring a curse into the camp. Achan, however, tempted by the garments and the gold, obeyed not the injunction ; and, accordingly, when Israel went next out to battle, they were smitten before the Canaanites. This led to inquiry, and the inquiry to detection. The Israelites were brought before the Lord, tribe by tribe, and the tribe of Judah was taken ; the tribe of Judah was brought family by family, then household by household, and then man by man ; till at last the unerring finger of Omnipotence pointed out Achan, the son of Zerah, as the troubler of Israel. The address of Joshua to the criminal, when thus singled from his fellows, is every way worthy our attention : “ My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession unto him.” *Making confession*, you observe, is associated, or rather identified, with the *giving God glory*. When Achan owned that he had taken of the accursed thing, he publicly proclaimed that God had shown himself omniscient as having brought to light what no eye but his own had observed. The acknowledgement, moreover, was proof to the nation, that God had not smitten without cause, and that his threatenings always take effect ; thus witnessing, so that the whole congregation would understand the testimony, to the justice, truth, and holiness of Jehovah. And if by making confession, and so declaring, that God had fastened on the criminal, Achan may be said to have set before his countrymen an exhibition of Deity, as the Omnipotent one, and the just, and the mighty, and the faithful, why, it is easy to observe, that this guilty thing cowering under the weight of convicted inquiry, and shrinking from the reproaches of the nation whose victories his covetousness had arrested, was all the while instrumental to the magnifying God, and thus did what Joshua demanded—give God glory by acknowledging his wickedness.

Now it holds good generally, as well as in this particular case, that to confess sin is to glorify God. We speak, of course, of that confession which is but the expression of the feelings of the heart; the language of the lip being nothing worth, except as representing with accuracy the sentiments graven on the internal tablet. In Psalm li. you find David saying, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest" He confesses sin, you observe, with the very intent that the confession might honour God, by proving him just in condemning, and clear in judging. And you have only to suppose, that when all the Achans who have ever troubled and profaned this creation, refusing to put away from them their lust and their covetousness, stand one shivering mass before the judgment-seat of Christ, there shall come forth from the self-condemned group the thrilling cry, "Against thee, thee only, have we sinned;" and we cannot doubt that this cry would be felt throughout the crowds of earnest spectators at the last assize, the criminal feeling within himself ample indications of the fearful trouble: and thus, the throwing open the hidden book of conscience, which would be effected by the utterance of this cry, would be the presenting a mighty page to the universe, in which all orders might read the thorough righteousness of the forth-coming condemnation; and the Achans, ere they went to their fire and their anguish, would give glory to God, as proving by their confession that he is justified when he speaks, and clear when he judges. And though, undoubtedly, transferring the scene of illustration to the day of the winding up of all the business of this earth would give an energy to the confession over and above that which belongs to it now; yet every reason which proves the illustration accurate, when the time is the judgment, applies with great, though perhaps diminished force, when the time is that of probation. When I find that, in acknowledging myself a sinner, I acknowledge myself a rebel against the Almighty, and thus out of my own mouth the eternal justice will be vindicated if there were pronounced against me that sentence of banishment which is yet to be heard by the impenitent multitude; certainly if that confession of sin which is the fruit or element of repentance, could in any degree effect the result ascribed to it by David, that God may be "justified when he speaks, and clear when he judges," there can be no doubt that in this very degree it brings honour to God: and thus we recur with new proof to the proposition we have in hand, namely, that to summon men to repent is to summon them to give glory to God.

There is, however, a confession which is far stronger, and more productive of glory than that of the lip, even that of the *life*. Repentance, whatever its internal workings, maintains in it outward demonstration, which is known and read of all men, of the complete change of conduct. You would all regard it as a contradiction in terms, to speak of the sinner as repenting, and yet not entering on a new course of life. When the lost image of God is stamped on the soul, the impress will communicate itself from the affections to the conduct, so that the very results we are in quest of will be accomplished, men will see the good works of a true repentance, and glorify their Father which is in heaven.

Their is not in all the range of **this** creation an exhibition which brings

so much honour to God, as the altered life of the renewed man. Whose is that power by which he does violence to the strongest passions of his nature, and crucifying the flesh, walks the earth a living martyr? Whose is that eyesight which seems to pierce futurity, and which brings around him the scenery of the invisible world with as much vividness, and fraught with as much of stimulating energy, as appertains to the objects of sense when applying to men who are the slaves of concupiscence? Whose is that devotedness of soul which manifests itself in the most disinterested philanthropy, in the recognizing a brotherhood throughout the whole human family; in the living for God, and not for sense; in the spending and being spent, that impression may be made on a wretched and fallen world, and the regenerated fruits of Christianity go out like leaven through all the mass of society? Who took off the spell from the pulse, and bade it throb with immortality? Who strung the nerves for the battle with evil angels and evil men? Who gave the spirit that elastic spring, by which, overleaping time with all its trials, and death with all its terrors, he can plant himself before God's throne, and commune peacefully with that glorious throng into whose companionship he has yet to be admitted? O, it will not be questioned by any one who knows what that change is which passes on a man's temper, and desires, and habits, and pursuits, when he has been transferred by repentance from a state of alienation to a state of favour, that there would not be given a more overcoming evidence of the might of the Lord if, whilst we gazed on the rude mountain, the rock suddenly resolved itself into an Eden, with domes and columns of magnificent architecture, than is presented when, from the chaos of a corrupt nature, rises in strength and symmetry, a temple of the Holy Ghost. If, indeed, the life of a godly man be a perpetual manifestation of the power of his Maker; and if his holiness be an image, though most faint and imperfect, of the divine; and if in his obedience there be a representation to man of the wisdom of God, and the sanctity of his laws; it must be taken as an unquestionable truth, that he who walks in righteousness gives glory to God: and forasmuch as repentance is the first step in the path-way, we may be said to have wrought up to completeness our proof, that to summon man to repentance is to summon him to give glory to God.

To repent, then, is to give glory to God. But the prophet lays down a limitation as to *time* which demands to be examined. "Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains." "*Before:*" there is a whole volume of intelligence, and that, too, startling and touching intelligence, in this one word, "Give glory *before*." It is as much as to say, "You cannot avoid giving it at one time or another; you must give it *after*, if you refuse to give it *before*. Give it, therefore, while it may be accepted as an *offering*: defer not until it is wrung from you as a *penalty*." And certainly it is a truth which little reasoning would suffice to substantiate, that glory hath to be won to the Almighty from every section of the universe, and from every member of that intelligent family with which its far-spreadings are peopled. It were a grievous mistake to suppose, that when Satan gained entrance into Paradise, and man fell fully and fatally from allegiance, the great end of creation was frustrated; so that as far as humanity is concerned God could no longer gain honour from

the work of his hands. We plead against this mistake as ruinous to all that is beauteous in our theology: for the moment that you establish that God's purpose was defeated, you establish a kind of necessity that he should interfere for his own vindication, and thus do away with the most exquisite of all truths, that it was only his gushing love towards the lost that moved him to devise a method for snatching them from destruction. The great end of creation was not frustrated by apostacy. God would have been justified had the earth remained unredeemed; for as the earth went its round in the firmament, scarred and spoiled, and crowded with a wailing population, it would have been such a monument of the justice of the Creator, as might have struck awe into every rank of intelligent beings, and have proclaimed the fearfulness of disobedience wherever there was risk of departure from God.

And in like manner it is not indispensable to our giving glory, that we hearken to the message of reconciliation, and break away from the bondage of unrighteousness. This is indispensable to our giving God glory now; for whilst living in the slavery of sin, with the deep-grained corruption of our nature in no degree extenuated, we are only as blots on the face of creation, dishonouring every moment that Being from whose fulness we draw our existence; but the tribute which we may keep back through the few years of our earthly state, shall be exacted to the last fraction on the other side of the grave. It is beyond all peradventure, that in the punishment of the reprobate as in the happiness of the penitent, there shall be a harvest of honour to be reaped by God. Hell, as well as heaven, must be the scene for the display of the divine attributes. Wherever these attributes find a theatre for development, there undoubtedly the Almighty is glorified. And we say not, then, of the dying sinner, going hence in his ungodliness, that he has outlived all opportunity of giving glory to God; we rather say of him, he has just reached the necessity of giving glory to God. A moment more, and if that moment be another and the last of dishonour done to God, why infinity is before him paved with the burning tribute which has here been withheld, so that the daring rebel has only transferred to eternity arrears which eternity cannot exhaust.

If this be true, you will all observe the emphasis of the exhortation: "Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains." It is not that you can give no glory *after* your feet have stumbled: you must glorify God if you continue denying him his due, until you fall into the grave, and the day of grace be ended. But before the darkness is woven around you, and before your feet have stumbled, you may give glory by gaining for yourselves a new heart, and living that new life which is the infancy of a blessed immortality. After the gathering of the last shadows, and after the failing of the limbs, the glory may be given only by the presentation of a sacrifice to justice, and that sacrifice ourselves. God may be, yea shall be, everlastingly glorified by those consigned to outer darkness, wanderers on the black mountains of his indignation. If it were in the power of man to dishonour God *eternally*, there were nothing so strange in his resolve of dishonouring God for a *time*: but since the dishonour can, at the longest, be only for a moment, and must then give place to the glory which you may with reluctance, but cannot refuse to render; is it not a marve<sup>1</sup>

the infatuation which makes men deaf to the entreaty, " Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains ?"

We know not that there is any imagery in the whole range of Scripture, which delineates with a more terrible accuracy than this of our text, the cheerlessness of an unrighteous old age, and the misery of dying impenitent. How true is it of old persons, enfeebled in mind and body, and unacquainted with the hopes and consolations of religion, that their feet are just stumbling on the dark mountains ! The bodily decrepitude is but too faithful an illustration of the spiritual. As the tottering limbs will not bear them along the earth, so the soul has no footing on the unlimited future. It may indeed be, according to the expression of the text, that they " look for light." There are various ideas which, with their deadened sensibilities and their spurious theology, they may embrace and cherish, and find in some sense satisfaction : the dreamy notion of a well-spent life ; the false estimate of the mercy of God ; the vague thought, that only an extreme degree of wickedness, and that degree certainly not theirs, will be visited with punishment : these are the delusions by which men repent, not to give God glory, but to uphold themselves as they totter on to death, and from which they gather hope, that they shall find a life of light, and rest, and happiness, in that unknown world which they must enter when they die. But what says the prophet unto such ? He exhorts to genuine repentance, lest " while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness before you." The light may be looked for up to the very instant of dissolution, and then you cannot find words which shall convey accurately the idea. The eye of the soul opens upon darkness, gross darkness ! God is before it—that Being who is all light, and yet it is darkness ! Eternity is before it—that unbroken march in which there are no sunsets, and yet it is darkness ! O, we must be bold, and add, hell is before it—that state which is all fire, and yet it is darkness ! We know not how to grapple with the representation. A flame which scorches, but does not illuminate—is this the portion of the impenitent ? Those dark mountains, are they as volcanoes which shrivel those who touch them, and yet emit no sparks to render less oppressive the everlasting midnight ?

We leave the representation in its undiscoverable mysteriousness : we have no language for a state where the fire is unquenchable, and yet the darkness impenetrable. We thank God we may all give glory before our feet stumble, and before the day closes : we may all prove the genuineness of repentance by our zeal to turn others from the error of their ways. It is this which, in conclusion, we would press earnestly on your attention. We have shewn you, that to repent is to give glory to God. We have sought to establish this by various proofs ; and, amongst others, by the altered deportment of the penitent, who will henceforward live a life of consciousness and activity in God's service. And by no feature will this deportment be more characterized than that of a desire, and a corresponding endeavour, to bring those around him to a like state of repentance. Having glorified God by his own change, he longs and labours that he may be yet more glorified, in the change of multitudes who are still in sin and wickedness. We thus furnish you with a test by which you may determine whether you have given God the glory demanded in our

text. If you have, you will be solicitous and active, that the same glory may be given by others. Hence you will be zealous in aiding every effort to instruct the ignorant, and guide the perishing into the path-way of life. And if desirous generally to bring your fellow creatures to repentance and the knowledge of God, we need hardly say, that the young will be, in an especial degree, the objects of your carefulness. If you have yourselves been enabled, through God's grace, to shun the dark mountains, you cannot look with indifference on the rising generation, thousands of whom have no human guide to warn them away from the fiery region. You cannot be content that they should be left to stumble on the rough hills, as sheep without a shepherd; and grope as in the night, as though no "day-spring from on high" had broken beautifully on this creation. You cannot be content that their young voices should not join in giving glory to the Lord; and that those on whose opening years poverty presses with overcoming weight, and whose prospects are perhaps suddenly clouded through the death of their natural guardians, should be abandoned to all the dreariness of moral destitution, no hand being stretched forth to prevent their being cast finally into that "outer darkness," where "there shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth."

Therefore we may reckon on your co-operation in every effort to educate, in the principles of Christianity, the children of the poor. If out of the mouths of babes and sucklings God doth ordain strength, we may especially contribute to the giving him glory by leading the young to acquaintance with his will. And amongst all the institutions which propose this object, there is none I think more worthy your support than that of which I am at present the advocate. Let me state at once that the *St. Ann's Society Schools* are not to be confounded with the national schools, and other public institutions now in most parishes, and on whose behalf appeals are of necessity constantly made to public benevolence. The Schools for which I plead are of a higher description, and therefore requiring much ampler pecuniary resources. The *St. Ann's Society Schools* were founded in the year 1709, and have, ever since, sometimes under bright, and sometimes under cloudy auspices, opened their doors to the children of the necessitous, and more especially (we wish this to be observed) to the descendants of persons who have seen better days. The Society has two establishments. At Brixton a noble structure has been reared, capable of accommodating one hundred boys and fifty girls. All who obtain admission into this asylum are entirely provided for. They receive a thorough education; the boys remaining till they attain the age of fourteen, the girls fifteen years of age; and being then apprenticed, or placed out by the Society. There is a second school in the City, in which between sixty and seventy are clothed and educated, but who possess not the extended advantages which belong to the inmates of the Brixton Asylum.

Such are simply the claims of the institution: the claims speak for themselves. And when I tell you that the parents of many of the children now succoured by the Society were in most respectable circumstances, and little thought that their young ones, over whom they watched, and for whom they prayed, would ever be dependent upon charity, the appeal comes so close home to ourselves, that to refuse to uphold this asylum would be like refusing to provide a possible resting-place for our own boys and girls, when we our-

selves shall have been gathered to the grave. But at all events, we are to be urged by the noble motives of Christianity; by the love of Him who took compassion on an orphan world—toiled for it, and bled for it, and died for it, to give glory to God, and shew ourselves true followers of Christ by coming forward as the patrons of the destitute.

Again we say to all, that you may, if you have not yet repented, give glory before your feet stumble, and before the day closes. We are not yet on the dark mountains: if we are approaching them, if we seem to discern them on our horizon like the iron masses of the Alps in sackcloth, O! still the Sun of Righteousness is not gone down on our firmament; and there needs nothing but faith in Jesus, “delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification,” and the beams of that sun shall edge, as with a line of gold, the black and frowning rampart, or rather throw a transparency into the shadowy prospect, so that it seems to melt into the garden of hope, the land where the river of life is ever flowing, and the tree of life is ever waving. May God grant that we may give him the glory that is due unto his name! “The night cometh, when no man can work:” and therefore “while it is called to-day” evil companions, let us break off from them; passions and lusts, let us strive to withstand them; injurious friendships, let us be bold to dissolve them; the Bible, let us be diligent in searching it; the aid of God’s Spirit, let it be sought in prayer: and there then is no presumption, there is only just confidence in the hope, that having glorified God *here* by our imperfect obedience, we shall gain *hereafter* a richer eternity of unbroken consecration.

I know not if I can add any thing on behalf of the Institution which solicits your support. It is, we wish you to observe, the *Christian* education of the poor which we press on you as an imperative duty, and the hearty promotion of which may be taken in proof that you have given glory to God by genuine repentance. We have no faith whatever in any other education. We are no advocates whatever for enlarging the *mind*, and making no attack on the *heart*. We are no supporters of systems which cherish the *intellect*, and care nothing for the *conscience*. We would not give the inconsiderable assistance which it may be in our power to give to any plan which is to equip men with energy of examination and grasp of spirit in reference to what is temporal, and leave them the prey of every deceiver in reference to what is eternal. The land has enough of mere intellectual education. Look at our prisons, they are not filled with the absolutely uneducated: their cells are not swarming with those who never went to school, who cannot read and cannot write. The mass of prisoners have received all the rudiments of common knowledge, and the ignorant and uninstructed are only the exceptions. We do not then want a mere intellectual education, which would give us a mighty but an ungovernable population; a population taught its strength, but not its right use; a population which in its scorn of slavery will not stop short of tyranny; a population, therefore, which must spring out with the restlessness of a giant, and in the pride of its newly-found vigour level with the earth whatever is glorious, noble, and ancestral. We want not, we say, a mere intellectual education; we want a religious education; an education based on the old-fashioned, but irreversible principles, that the readiest mode of making a man a good member of society is to make him a good Christian—that in teaching him to fear God

we bind him to the performance of every duty which devolves upon him in every relationship. And we commend the St. Ann's Society Schools to your liberal support, because we believe they labour to impart a religious education, and are therefore worthy your care, both as philanthropists and Christians. May God incline your hearts to give him glory by the manner in which you respond to this imperfect appeal!

## THE OMNIPRESENCE OF GOD.

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REV. S. SUMMERS,

CRAVEN CHAPEL, REGENT-STREET, JUNE 28, 1835.

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"Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord."—JEREMIAH, xxiii. 24.

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THIS language may be considered as a strong affirmation of the sentence which it contains. The interrogatory form of speech is sometimes adopted by the inspired writers, and not unfrequently by ourselves, to give force and feeling to a sentiment which might be correctly expressed in the form of a proposition. The information conveyed in this passage is, that no man can hide himself in secret places that God shall not see him, because he fills heaven and earth. THE OMNIPRESENCE OF GOD is a high and sacred subject of meditation; it demands your most devout and reverent attention. The simple fact, that the Eternal God, whose we are and whom we are bound to serve, is present with us to-day—is in this house with each individual—that though we cannot see him, he is as essentially with us as he is in any part of the visible or invisible creation—that he is more intimately present with each of us than we are to each other—that though distinct from us he is more perfectly acquainted with what transpires within us, with the thoughts and feelings of our hearts, than we are ourselves—should at least produce the deepest solemnity and the profoundest awe. Give me, then, my dear hearers, your fixed attention, while for a few minutes we meditate on this attribute of the Deity, and attempt to draw from it some of the practical lessons which it teaches.

And lest the least informed should stumble at the word *omnipresence* which I have used, the doctrine which I have to teach is—that *God is every where*; that there is no conceivable spot in the universe where God is not. You can easily understand this fact; as easily as you can understand that you are in this place, or that God is any where. If you can comprehend the terms, "God exists," you can comprehend the terms, "God exists every where." It is not more difficult to conceive of the Divine Being as present on earth, than it is to conceive of him as present in heaven. The terms in which the attributes of Deity are expressed are among the simplest forms of human speech, and convey a clear and perfect idea to the human mind. Every one understands the expression, "God knows all things." If you know any thing if there is *one* thing with which you are acquainted, you can easily understand what it is to know *two* things: and you can extend the thought infinitely by the negative form of expression, and say, "That there is not one thing with

which God is not perfectly acquainted." "God can do all things," is a proposition equally intelligible to you. *You* can do something: and without effort you can extend the idea to others, who can do more than you can; and yet further to God, and express his all-sufficiency by saying, that there is not any thing which God cannot do. The existence and attributes of God may thus be taught by a number of plain elementary propositions, the terms of which are intelligible to a child.

The philosophy, however, of these propositions is beyond our reach. Directly we begin to inquire, How can these things be? we meet with insurmountable difficulties; we arrive at bounds which we cannot pass; we at once perceive the limited nature of our capacities, that it is vain for the finite to attempt to apprehend the Infinite. "Who by searching can find out God? who can find out the Almighty unto perfection?" The mode by which a being is every where present is truly incomprehensible to us.

But the difficulty does not exclusively rest on the doctrine of the omnipresence of God. The simple fact of the presence of an immaterial spirit in any one place is likewise beyond our utmost efforts to comprehend. We know this fact: we know the soul is united to the body of man; that this union is essential to perfect humanity; and until separated at death, this union is so intimate, that it may be affirmed, that where the body is there the soul is. At the present moment you see me, you hear me; but were the union of body and soul dissolved for the short period we remain together, you would neither see nor hear me. Your eyes and ears are but instruments which your soul employs; as completely instruments as the telescope and the hearing trumpet: they are the instruments by which your soul perceives objects and receives sounds. Now how the soul can be present with the body the wisest of men cannot ascertain: it is as inexplicable as it is true. We are utterly ignorant of the mode, or of the point of junction between body and soul. The most rigid anatomy of the brain, which is supposed to be the organ of thought and consciousness, will not enable the physiologist to say, that the seat of the brain is *here*, or that the seat of the brain is *there*. The soul is gone, but the brain is perfect in all its parts; and we learn nothing of the mode by which the immaterial spirit is present with the body to influence and affect it.

When we cannot comprehend in any degree how a spirit can be present in any one place, even in a human body, where we have most satisfactory proof of the existence, we must not be surprised if we cannot comprehend how the Infinite Spirit is present in every portion of the universe. Of the way by which mind is connected with matter we know absolutely nothing: how they can be united—how mind influences matter, how it can be present with it, are amongst the secret things that belong to God; the things only which are revealed belong to us and to our children.

Without, therefore, attempting to explain the doctrine, we must guard you against false ideas of the omnipresence of God, which might lead you into dangerous and fatal error. In conceiving of the fact that God is every where present, you must at once reject all those ideas which suggest themselves to your mind from your familiarity with matter. We know, for example, that the same matter, the same body cannot be in two places at the same moment of time; but we do not know this to be true of spirit. Our Lord said to Nicodemus, "I came down from heaven, and yet am in heaven." He was on earth

and in heaven at the same moment of time. He spake not this of his body, nor of his human soul ; but of his Deity. " God is a Spirit," and says in the text, " Do not I fill heaven and earth ?" We know also, that matter occupies space, to the exclusion of other matter from the same space : but God exists in all space, in all matter, in its most solid masses and in its subtlest forms, in the primeval mountain, and in the ethereal firmament. His existence does not exclude other spiritual essences ; for the universe of intelligent mind has its being in him. We know also that matter is a compound ; that it may be decomposed, that it may be dissected ; that it is also capable of infinite divisibility into parts : but God is uncompounded ; he is a simple essence ; he is incapable of either decomposition or divisibility. So that if he be *every where* present, he is *wholly* present every where ; there is not part of him here, and part of him there—part of him in heaven, and part of him on earth ; but his whole being is every where. He consequently does not move from place to place, as material bodies do ; but at all times his infinite being is present in all places.

In every attempt to conceive of the divine omnipresence, you must therefore carefully distinguish between the properties of spirit and of matter. You must not attribute to the Eternal Spirit the ideas of extension, solidity, divisibility, or circumscription ; but while his infinity fills heaven and earth, it is complete in every portion of space. It is not contained in or circumscribed to any thing, but it is present in every thing. It is perfectly consistent with all he has created, and with all he may yet create ; and yet it is clearly distinguished from one portion, or the whole, of his works.

Neither must we conceive of the divine omnipresence as the diffusion of his essence, as matter is extended by the attenuation of its parts ; but he is the one Eternal Spirit, whose living energy extends infinitely beyond the bounds of creation, and who yet preserves the totality of his essence in every portion of his works : so that he exists in his almighty, and wisdom, and perfection, to display or to withhold the manifestation of his attributes, at all times, in all places, as he pleases. " He doeth as it pleaseth him in the armies of heaven, and amongst the inhabitants of the earth."

In meditating on this attribute of the Deity, you must also lay aside, for a time, those expressions of the Divine Word that speak of him as though he possessed a body, and attribute to him the different members, and the different properties, of the human body. Thus we read of " the eye," " the hand," " the arm" of God ; of " the face of Jehovah :" not that, strictly speaking, he hath eye, or hand, or arm, or face. These expressions are to be regarded as stepping-stones to elevated and sublime conceptions of the Deity. They are not the ultimate objects of God ; they are rather the resting-places of the mind ; easy modes of transition, adapted to our weakness, by which we ascend in our conceptions from feebleness to power—from the limited range of human vision to the omnipresence of God, from the limitation of minds meted out to us in small capacities, to his hand and his arm, to the boundless perfections of Jehovah, who is represented as " measuring the waters in the hollow of his hand," as " meting out the heavens with a span," as " weighing the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance :" the " nations are but as a drop of the bucket before him, and are counted as the small dust of the balance : he taketh up the isles as a very little thing."

There is also another class of passages to which we must advert, which speak of God as "dwelling in the heavens," as "coming down" from them, as "drawing near" to us; as "forsaking us;" as "returning to his own place." Now such expressions are not to be understood as if God were more in one place than in another, but this language is adopted in reference to his actions, or his manifestation in the way of judgment or of mercy. God is at all times invisible; but he makes himself known, he gives evidence of his presence, by remarkable influences or remarkable operations; or he withdraws this evidence in one place more than he does in another. The display of his presence was extraordinary at Mount Sinai, and in the holiest of holies in the Jewish temple: but, at the very same time, he was actually and essentially present in every part of the universe. So that all such expressions speak not of his essential presence, but of the manifestation of his attributes.

With these hints to preserve you from notions which might load the subject with insuperable difficulties, we proceed to give you the Scriptural proof of the omnipresence of the Deity.

The first idea associated with omnipresence, is that of *infinite knowledge*. If a being is perfectly acquainted with me—if he knows all I do, and all I say, and all I think—he is, in an eminent sense, present with me. In this sense God is every where present; there is nothing hidden, nothing concealed from him. "Can any hide himself in secret places that God shall not see him?" God is perfectly acquainted with all existences; with matter in all its forms, with mind in all its states. He created the world out of nothing, and he gave to matter its properties; he must therefore be acquainted with them. He knows every thing he has formed; his eye pierces through the thick darkness and through the solid earth: the bowels of the globe are open to his inspection: he knows the vein of the silver, and the place of gold: he setteth an end to darkness, and searcheth out all perfection: he cutteth out rivers among the rocks; and his eye seeth every precious thing: he looketh to the ends of the earth, and seeth over the whole heaven. God revealeth deep and secret things: he knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him. Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.

He is equally acquainted with the world of mind. His eyes are upon the ways of men; he seeth all their goings. His eyes behold the nations; the thing that is hidden God bringeth to light. He will judge the secrets of men, and reveal deep and secret things. He is perfectly acquainted with all that we say; for "by our words we shall be justified, and by our words we shall be condemned." His knowledge extends to all states of mind—to thought, to motive, to feeling. "Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." He will not only bring to light the hidden thing of darkness, but he will make manifest the counsels and secret thoughts of all hearts. The Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts. "Thus saith the Lord, I know the things which come into your minds, every one of them, O house of Israel." He distinguished between every description of character: no veil of deception, no hypocrisy, can conceal from him the real state of the mind. "The Lord knoweth them that are his." "A meek and quiet spirit is, in the sight of God, of great price." "Humble yourselves in the sight of God, and in due time he shall lift you up." "He

**a**baseth the proud, but he exalteth the humble." "As for the proud God knoweth them afar off." "This people," he says, "draw near unto me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me."

These passages, my dear hearers, are but a sample of multitudes contained in the inspired volume, which teach the omniscience of the Deity and consequently his omnipresence; which exhibit him as perfectly conversant with all the material and the intelligible universe. But these facts are finely explained in the Psalm that I read at the commencement of the service. Nor is there any truth stated with greater distinctness, with more amplitude of expression, with more richness of imagery, than that all events exist, and all transpire, in the immediate presence of God.

Another proof of the omnipresence of God, may be derived from *his direct, constant, and universal agency*. Wherever a being immediately operates, there he is present. When God created the world out of nothing, he was present at its production: but the same power is requisite to sustain, as to create, the universe. If we imagine the lights of heaven to exist and move, and the processes of nature to be carried on by the laws of this Creator, yet let it be remembered, that there is no binding power in law; it is only the ordinary rule by which creative energy and power sustains the world, and the works he has formed. Thus it is with God's power in the laws of nature, not simply by ordination or by appointment, but by a perpetual impartation of mighty energy, which, if for a moment withheld, the world would cease to be.

If the creation of the world thus necessarily implied the presence of God, its preservation equally requires it. The Scriptures amply explain and illustrate how direct, how constant, his universal agency. "He forms the light and creates darkness;" day and night come at his bidding, summer and winter, seed-time and harvest, are the results of his perpetual agency. He "bindeth the sweet influences of Pleiades, and looseth the bands of Orion. He bringeth forth Mazzaroth in his season; and guideth Arcturus, with his sons. He knoweth the ordinances of heaven, and setteth the dominion thereof in the earth. He sendeth forth the forked lightnings and the roaring thunders. He fills the appetite of lions, and provides for the raven his food. He giveth to the sea its bounds, and sendeth its springs into the valleys which run among the hills; he watereth the hills from his chamber, and the earth is satisfied with the fruit of his works. He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herbs for the service of man. The Lord preserveth man and beast."

And he is not only employed in preserving his works, but, as far as our knowledge extends, he is perpetually calling new beings into existence, and terminating the present condition of others. Both are perpetually passing the opposite barriers of life, entering into existence, and passing out of it: but neither event transpires without the immediate presence of God: a sparrow falleth not to the ground without his permission. He numbers our days; he takes away our breath; we die, and return to the dust. He subtracts life from us, and we perish: he withdraws his influence, and we fade as doth a leaf. Life is eminently the work of God; it is one of his immediate acts: to impart it he employs no known means: he "breathes into man the breath of life," and we become "living souls." He gives to all life, motion, being. "O Lord," says the Psalmist, "I will praise thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Marvellous are thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance,"

he goes on to say, "was not hid from thee when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them." There is no life but what is imparted by God. He makes and fashions every being: every beast, and bird, and fish, and winged insect, and creeping thing, is the product of his mighty power; and his creative energy is perpetually peopling air, earth, and water with animated existences. "Without him was not any thing made," and "by him all things consist."

His providential government of the world is but the exercise of his constant agency in the affairs of man. Empires rise and fall; dynasties are created and destroyed. He setteth up one, and casteth down another. All blessing is from God: he is present to crown exertion with success. Yea, you may rise up early, and eat the bread of carefulness, and sit up late; but it will all be in vain without the blessing of God. "The husbandman casteth his seed into the ground, but he knoweth not which shall prosper, whether this or that; or whether they shall both be alike good:" but the measure of increase is from God. "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." Adversity also is his appointment. "Is there evil in the city and the Lord hath not done it?" He apportions to us our sorrows; he lays the weight of affliction upon us, or he removes from us its pressure. "He maketh sore, and he bindeth up, he woundeth, and his hands make whole." In the least, and in the most inconsiderable events of life his agency is to be recognized. Is there distress of nations, and perplexity, and the Lord is not there? Is there famine of water, and pestilence, in any part of the world, and the Lord is not there? Is there peace, and fruitful seasons, and healthful breezes, and the Lord is not there? Are there bereaved families—parents weeping for their children, children weeping for their parents—husbands mourning for wives, or wives for husbands—and the Lord is not there? Are there diseased bodies and wasting frames, and dying beds, and the Lord is not there? O, life and death are evidences of his presence; and all the events which crowd between them receive a character and influence from an ever-present Deity.

Another proof of the omnipresence of God, is to be derived from *the accomplishment of his purposes*. The world was created for his glory: but if on its production he had retired from it, only sustaining it in being, we might have seen his power in creation; but his wisdom, his might, his goodness in the works of providence, would not have been displayed. But he governs the world which he has made, and his supremacy is so complete that nothing happens without his permission; and every purpose of the Eternal Mind will be fully and perfectly accomplished. "The purpose of the Lord shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure."

To accomplish these objects he must be everywhere present; not only acquainted with external events, but with the thoughts and the intents of the human heart. His purposes are accomplished by instituting means to perform them, or by frustrating their intentions, or by controlling their actions; and sometimes by the interposition of his direct agency. But God never loses sight of his plans; he never gives up his purposes: but he renders the actions of voluntary agents subservient to them. He brings good out of evil; he

elicits order out of confusion and chaos : and whatever be the vain imaginations of his creatures—from perplexing events, from domestic circumstances, from mysterious dispensations—he brings forth the purposes of the Eternal Mind into the day-light of everlasting truth. Thus he raised up Joseph to be the saviour of his family at a future period of famine. Thus also he raised up Moses to deliver the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage. He stirred up Nebuchadnezzar to enslave, and Cyrus to emancipate, the Jews. In later times he incited Luther to commence, and others to carry on, the great and noble work of the Reformation. And in our own days he has raised up missionaries, who have gone to distant and remote parts of the earth, and have manifested prodigious zeal and energy in the great work of converting sinners.

Sometimes he frustrates the intentions of man, when they are not in accordance with the purposes of God. He defeats their schemes ; he confounds their plans ; he turns their counsel into foolishness, as he did that of Ahithophel. He “ bringeth the counsels of the heathen to nought ; he frustrateth the tokens of liars, and maketh diviners mad. He turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish.”

Frequently he controls the actions of men. He causes “ the wrath of man to praise him, and the remainder of that wrath he restrains.” He lets men have their ways ; but he brings out a different result to that which they have anticipated : he employs them as agents, and accomplishes purposes the very opposite to those which they had contemplated. Thus the enemies of Paul sought his life, but God overruled their persecutions, and accomplished his own designs and the wishes of Paul by it, in that he “ might preach the Gospel also to them that were at Rome.”

Then again, when it is necessary, God is present every where to interfere by his direct agency. Of such a nature is all miraculous interposition. His leading the Israelites in the wilderness, is but a history of continued miracle. And in the same way he authenticated the mission of Jesus Christ to our world. The gift of his Son, the great scheme of human redemption in all its parts, is another instance of his direct interposition in human affairs. The pouring out of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost ; the miraculous gifts with which the early Christians were endowed ; and the way in which he is accomplishing his purposes of grace in the world, are of the same order of direct and immediate agency. His design is “ to purify to himself a people zealous of good works ;” to deliver them from the curse and from the dominion of Satan : but were he to leave them to themselves not a single soul would be saved. Men are dead in trespasses and sins ; and if raised to newness of life it must be by the energy of God. When a soul is converted from the error of his ways, God is there. When we are renewed in the spirit and temper of our mind, God is there. When men are made willing in the day of his power, God is there. We see him in the omnipotence of his grace breaking the hardest hearts, subduing the most stubborn souls, bringing to penitence the most obdurate sinners. And this event transpires, not only in one place, but in many places at the same time. On this Sabbath-day how many souls will be born to God ! Who shall limit the Holy One of Israel ? He is essentially in every part of the world ; the trophies of his grace may be gathered from every country under heaven. O, if some poor sinner in this assembly, who never thought before that he lived, and moved, and had his being in God ;

if some poor sinner should feel his power to-day in brokenness, in contrition of spirit; and if this miracle of mercy were to be repeated in other congregations, and in other parts of God's dominions, so that Europe, and Asia, and Africa, and America, should yield their captives to the Lord; what a blessed illustration would this be of the unquestionable fact, that God is every where present, and every where strong to save and mighty to redeem!

Now, in conclusion, we must briefly notice the lessons which the omnipresence of God powerfully teacheth. And let it, my dear hearers, impress on our minds a deep conviction of *the grandeur and the incomprehensibility of Jehovah*. Our course this morning has been upon the limits of the human faculties. At the utmost range of our powers we have looked into that which has a height which we cannot reach, and a depth which we cannot fathom. We feel our littleness: we are as nothing before God. But "great is the Lord and greatly to be praised; his greatness is unsearchable." He who fills heaven and earth infinitely transcends our feeble capacities: he fills all minds, but he is comprehended by none: he is every where present, but he is seen by none. He is light, and yet obscurity: his perfections are manifest and yet unsearchable. His dazzling glory, his excelling grandeur, his vast immensity, are more impenetrable than the thick darkness: they are like the sun, on which we cannot gaze for brightness. Our minds can only be occupied with one thought at a time; but all ideas, all effects, all thoughts, are for ever present to his view. Such knowledge is too wonderful for us; it is high, we cannot attain unto it. *We* cannot be in two places at the same moment of time; but *God* is in every place. *We* are ignorant of the world of mind; but *God* is acquainted with the thoughts and intents of the heart. He is always with me; he is about my bed and about my path; with me in the haunts of business; with me in my private retirement—at my lying down and at my rising up: and not with *me* only, but with every being, and with all his works. This transcends my conception: "It is high as heaven; what can we do? it is deep as hell; what can we know?" It is perfection I cannot trace; a vastness in which my faculties are lost; a presence which belongs to the Lord of the universe, to the Uncreated Majesty, to the Author of all being, to the great and mighty God—the Lord of Hosts is his name!

Let the subject teach us, in the next place, *the nature of all true religion*. All religion is founded on correct views of the Deity; it is the state, the habit of mind, which accords with our relation to God and his perfections. If, therefore, God be a Spirit, and by reason of his spiritual nature is every where present, then he must be worshipped in spirit and in truth; that is, in sincerity and with the heart. External homage can only be acceptable to God as it is indicative of a right state of mind. When we come into his temple professedly to adore the Infinite Jehovah, we should draw near with reverence and solemnity of spirit. Our outward deportment should indeed be serious and grave, in natural agreement with the awe and veneration which the immediate presence of God should create. All manifestation of levity, indifference, or inattention, is at variance with a right state of mind, and the open violation of the decorum with which we should worship in the house of God. But our religion, my dear hearers, must not be confined to externals; a reverential posture, and a grave countenance are of no value in the divine estimation, if

they be not the index of serious and devout feelings. The God we worship presides in his earthly temple : he is far off, but he is nigh also at hand. Intimately acquainted with the thoughts and feelings of our mind at the present moment, he requires to be loved, and feared, and obeyed : and if you have come into his house to-day with no intention to cherish these affections, with no desire to yield him more implicit obedience, you affront the majesty of heaven. What, my dear hearers, were he to contend with you; were he to say, as he does in his Holy Writ, " How long will ye pollute my sanctuary ? how long bring abomination for sacrifice ? how long worship me with feigned lips ? Is this the homage I require ? " " He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good ; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God ? " and remember, " I am he who searcheth the heart and trieth the reins of the children of men."

The doctrine of the omnipresence of the Deity should also teach us, that *religion is a habit of mind*. It consists not in isolated acts of worship ; not in our regular attendance on the Sabbath in the house of prayer : but the conviction that God seeth us at *all times* should make us religious in *all places*. Frequently the piety of men is confined to the sanctuary, like the fawning homage of the earthly courtier to the presence-chamber of the king. But if God is every where ; if he is in your shops and counting-houses, in the market and on the exchange, in the domestic circle and at the convivial meeting, a Sabbath-day religion will neither be an honour to God nor a source of happiness to you. Religion must be, my dear hearers, the staple of life ; it must regulate all your conduct, it must influence all your actions. We must live in the divine presence ; we must set him always before us. The abiding conviction of his presence is the life, the spirit, of all piety, the great safe-guard against temptation, the strongest incentive to holy actions. If we realize this truth, how often shall we in the hour of our soul's peril be able to say, " Is it better to please God, or to please man ? How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God ? " How frequently would it urge us to duty, if we remembered that God was with us ! Job maintained his integrity, because he lived under this impression—" Doth he not see my ways ? " And the Psalmist could say, " I have kept thy precepts and thy testimonies : for all my ways are before thee."

Our subject is full of *consolation to the good man*. O, it is a delightful and cheering thought, that my heavenly Father is never absent from me. His power and wisdom, his grace and goodness, would be of little value to me, were they confined to the heavenly world. But though he is " the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth the praises of eternity, with that man he will dwell who is of a pure and contrite spirit, and who trembleth at his word." He is ever near me, because he is at my right hand I shall not be moved. He is essentially present every where ; but he stands not in the same relation to all men : he is the Father only of those who possess a filial spirit : he is reconciled only to those who trust in his Son. He is the source of the world's preservation but he is the overflowing fountain of the Church's grace and consolation. He exercises perfect control over all the affairs of the world ; but he is in his Church to delight in it. He manifests a tender pity and concern for it. He has said, " I the Lord do keep it ; I will water it every moment : lest any hurt it I will keep it night and day." The Keeper of Israel " neither slumbers

nor sleeps." O what a privilege, then, it is to be a Christian ; to have God always with me, to fulfil his promises, to guide me in difficulty, to sustain me in trial, to comfort me in sorrow, to cheer my fainting spirit, to impart strength to me when I have no might, to dissipate my fears, and to increase my hopes ! Am I in temptation ? " With every temptation God maketh a way for me to escape." Am I in weakness and fear, and trembling ? His eyes " run to and fro throughout all the earth, to shew himself strong in behalf of them whose hearts are perfect towards him." O there is no calamity which he cannot make to work together for my good ; there is no enemy from whom he cannot completely protect me. O, then, bind this truth about your heart, that *God is every where*. Whatever be your condition, let it cheer thee, faint-hearted Christian. God is every where ; therefore he can hear the faintest cry, and he can hear the deepest groan. The sigh of the prisoner enters into his ear ; yea, he catches the unexpressed petition ; for " Before you call," he says, " I will answer you ; and while you are yet speaking, I will hear."

Finally, however forgotten and contemned may be the doctrine of God's omnipresence, *it is an awful truth to ungodly men*. Most men do not think and live as in the presence of God. There is a fearful degree of practical infidelity in the world. Wicked men are perpetually saying, " God hath forgotten : he hideth his face ; he will never see it." Hard as man's heart is, bitter as his enmity to God is, he would not dare to commit open and notorious sin, if he could but see God : because then he could not rid himself of the conviction, " Thou, God, seest me." Men cannot commit aggravated crimes, which violate the social compact, before their fellow creatures : O, no, they choose the darkness, that their guilty deeds may be done in secret. Night is the theatre of crime ; and they fancy themselves screened and sheltered by its impenetrable gloom. Then it is the thief violates the sanctuary of home . then it is deeds of violence are committed : then it is lewdness leaves her secret chamber, and lust seeks its unhappy victim : then it is that sin riots, and crime is rife in the world. But " is there not a God that judgeth in the earth?" Is there not an eye that " runs to and fro, and beholdeth the evil and the good, to which the darkness and the light are the same ?" " Can any hide himself in secret places that God shall not see him ?"

O, my dear hearers, that you would know, that you would realize this truth —that there is no darkness, nor the shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity can hide themselves ! This truth will be known and will be felt at a future day : it will make its present despisers to tremble ; it will fill the minds of those who now forget it with shame, and confusion, and fear. To their irreparable and eternal ruin it will be found that God is perfectly acquainted with all the works of darkness ; that every sinful deed, and work, and thought, will be brought into judgment in that day when **God shall award to every man according as his work shall be.** Amen.

## THE HOLY SPIRIT AS AN INSTRUCTOR.

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REV. J. COOKE, D.D.

SURREY CHAPEL, JUNE 14, 1835.

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- "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."—JOHN, xiv. 16, 17.
  - "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."—Chap. xiv. 26.
  - "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me."—Chap. xv. 26.
  - "It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you, &c."—Chap. xvi. 7—15.
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THE subject that is immediately before us in the words that I have read is, The Spirit of God as the Instructor of the Church: and our object is to bring before you the nature of the education, as it were, which the Spirit, the Instructor, bestows upon the family of God, bringing before you, first, *the title* whereby the Spirit is revealed to the Church as instructing and educating the family of God.

In speaking of this matter I require to remind you of one thing: that as God always makes himself known to the Church, he always makes himself known by names suited to the Church's necessity. All the names and language of the world would not be able to express the fulness of God: if God were to employ all human language it would not be sufficient to describe him. How is it then that God does describe himself? Why he describes just as much of his own *fulness* as is calculated to fill up the Church's *emptiness*. For instance: when God revealed himself to Abraham, he did not reveal himself by the title JEHOVAH, but he revealed himself by the title GOD ALMIGHTY. And why did he do so? Because the great matter that the faith of Abraham wanted was, to understand the power of God, and the covenant of God. He was taking Abraham from his own friends; therefore Abraham wanted a friend in covenant, and God made himself known by the name of GOD, referring to his covenant relation to his child. But Abraham also was going forth into a land of strangers, and probably enemies; and his faith wanted to perceive God as endowed with power; therefore God revealed himself to Abraham by the title of THE ALMIGHTY.

But when Moses and the Israelites desired to see God, they had, written in the history of Moses, broad and large, the remembrance of the covenant through more than three hundred years; and they had in the whole transactions

in the land of Egypt beheld the mighty power and the outstretched arm of God: they were now carried into the wilderness, and the emptiness of their faith desired a new exhibition of the fulness of God: therefore unto Moses and unto the elders God brought out a new representation of himself—the representation of himself as GOD, JEHOVAH, including the *was*, the *is*, and the *coming*; as “the Lord God merciful and gracious”—that *mercy* because they were a rebellious generation, and that *grace* because they were a most polluted generation; “long-suffering”—for they would have worn out the suffering of any but the God of glory; “slow to wrath”—for they were a people deserving wrath even to *burn* against them; “keeping mercy for thousands”—for they were now a mighty people; “forgiving iniquity”—for they added iniquity to iniquity; “transgression and sin”—for their rebellions were multiplied into all forms; “yet by no means clearing the guilty”—they required to see that God was not one like unto themselves. Therefore, you perceive, that just as was the emptiness of their faith, God, in giving unto himself a name, brought out of his own fulness what was calculated to supply their necessities.

Now applying this principle, you will see how God writeth by his Son “a new name” unto himself; not because it is new to Him, but because it is new to the Church; and not because, in one sense, it is new to the Church, but that a new circumstance and necessity has arisen up in the Church: and it is God’s purpose to shew how, whatever form of emptiness can be found in man, there is a form of fulness in God that can occupy it; that whatever poverty there is in the Church, there are in the inexhaustible and incalculable riches of the Lord Jesus sufficient to fill the treasury; and that whatever the Church requires, there is in the excellence of God what will supply the Church’s wants, and accomplish all her desires.

Here now the Spirit is written unto us by three names. He was known unto the Church as the *Holy Spirit*; he had *revealed* unto the Church *the truth*; by types and shadows had he *comforted* the Church. But he was not known in the Church by the special exercise of his powers through the crucified flesh of the Son of God: all was but in type, in figure, in shadow. As a Comforter, in a particular manner, he had not yet come into the Church; he had sent nothing but shadows of comfort before him. But *now* he was to come into the Church as a Comforter; and having a particular work to do, he is in these three characters revealed; the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of Truth, the Comforter.

Our particular business is first to deal with the title of *the Comforter*, because this name is the first title that is given to him: “I will pray the Father, and he shall send you another Comforter.”

Now, although as the Holy Spirit he was known to the Church, as a teller and revealer of the truth, our Saviour expressly tells us, that never as a Comforter had he yet come into the world: and he tells us more—he *could not* come into the world unless our Lord went away. I pray you to look at this point as raised in xvi. 7. “I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.” Our Lord then makes his going away essential to the coming of the Spirit of God as a Comforter, and he declares that if he did not go away the Spirit would not come unto them, but if he

departed he would send him unto them. From which you must clearly perceive that the Spirit had not yet come into the world as a Comforter, that he had not yet received this new office which he was to derive from the crucified flesh of our Lord—that is, from our Lord “going away,” as he calls it, out of the world of life into the world of death.

Now what is the reason of this—that unless our Lord go away the Comforter will not come? You will perceive in this matter, that a Comforter is one required for a world of sorrow. You could not comfort a person that was in joy—you could only comfort a person that was in sorrow. Therefore the Spirit of God taking to himself this office of Comforter, has intimated that he was coming to them who were in trouble and sorrow. Consequently you find the fourteenth chapter begins with trouble: “Let not your hearts be troubled.” And now our Saviour says, “I will pray the Father, and he will send you another Comforter:” which words clearly intimate that our Lord was *one* Comforter. Now what was our Lord’s comfort? Our Lord’s comfort, first, as appears in the fourteenth chapter, was *faith*: “Ye believe in God, *believe* also in *me*.” You believe in God *invisible*—believe in me *visible* in the flesh. You believe in God infinite in *power*—believe in me infinite in *love*. You believe in God’s *capacity* to save—believe in me as *carrying* that capacity *into effect*. You believe in God as the God of the living—believe in me as your Saviour and your life.

Our Lord adds another comfort: “In my Father’s house are many mansions:” which place is the world of God and of glory. And then he says, “I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also.” The comfort of Jesus the Lord is two-fold—it is faith below, and heaven above; it is simple faith in him as God manifest in the flesh, and the honour and glory prepared above. But now he says, “I will give you another Comforter.” And how is it that he doth comfort? Why the difference between the comfort that the Saviour gave, and the comfort that the Holy Ghost gives through the flesh of Jesus, is, that as our Saviour gave *faith* as the germ of comfort, and *heaven above* as the enjoyment of comfort—it is the business of the Holy Ghost to establish heaven *here within*; for he says “He will abide with you and shall be in you.” Our Saviour’s comfort was only permanent in the principle of it in the established seeds of faith, and it was only hopeful as looking to the glory above. But he says, “I will give you another Comforter.” Our Saviour’s comfort was, the future glory of the throne; the comfort of the Holy Ghost was, the present enjoyment of the throne, having made the believer, through the crucified flesh of the Son of God, understand how his sin was taken away—how the Spirit of God dwelleth in him—how Father, Son, and Holy Ghost dwell in him, testifying unto him that heaven is not merely a futurity, but that heaven is a present enjoyment, having made us sit together in heavenly places in Jesus Christ.

But how comes it to pass that this comfort cannot come to a man unless Christ go away? This you will, perhaps, more easily understand through a parable drawn from nature, than you would from any lengthened argument.

The office of a comforter is not merely a property essential, but it is an office derivable—a property, and a circumstance. As I have said to you, you could not comfort a person who was in joy; whatever argument you could adduce, you could not impart comfort because he needed none. Therefore it

is essential to a comforter that he come to them that are in sorrow and distress. But there is something more than this. If you had no comfort to bring, and you came to a person in sorrow and grief, you could not take upon you the office of comforter.

Now the Holy Ghost in the world could not take unto him the office of comforter until the Lord Jesus Christ went away. For suppose the Holy Ghost cometh to a sinful man, can he be a comforter? Is the judge a comforter when he cometh into a town of assize, when the prisoner heareth the announcement of his entrance into the place of his habitation? Nay, he cometh as no comforter; he cometh to judge him for his crime. When a godly man cometh into the company of an ungodly man, cometh he as a comforter? No, he bringeth distress and anguish of heart into the conscience of the ungodly man. The Holy Ghost, coming to an unforgiven man, cometh as no comforter. Within the power of Omnipotence there is no comfort till sin be taken away. It is that ungodly thing that possesseth within itself such an antipathy to God that comfort cannot exist in the bosom of man until the sin is removed: and into the nearer contact the Holy Ghost cometh with an unforgiven sinner, the more miserable, the more wretched doth the man become. The Holy Ghost, therefore, taketh not unto himself, nor ever can take unto himself the office of a comforter, until Jesus hath put forth the energy of removing sin: and hence it is the Holy Ghost must conduct the dying Jesus out of the world, and sin be put away by the sufferings of the Saviour, before, out of the death of the Lord Jesus, he endoweth himself with the office of the comforter; and then he cometh in this character.

Now then, there is something more. The Spirit of Truth could never come as a comforter until Jesus went away. You know if a man come into the cell of a culprit, the more truth he telleth the culprit the more miserable doth he make him. If a lawyer come to the culprit and inquire his crime, the more the man telleth of his crime, and the more true interpretation of the law that his counsel, learned in those matters, giveth him, the more distress doth he bring to the mind of the man. The Spirit of God is a truth-teller where he is not a comforter. He has a truth to tell, even the death and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and the more truth he would tell a man, the more miserable would he make him; the very truth would be like a millstone hung about his neck to carry him deeper into the sea of God's wrath and condemnation. It was needful, therefore, that the Spirit of God, as the Holy Spirit, as the truth-teller, should have something that he would bring in addition to his holiness, and in addition to his truth-telling, concerning the sinner's condemnation, which would endue him with the office of the Comforter, and give him a new commission to declare to the pardoned man.

This will prepare us for receiving the parable with which I would illustrate the fact, that the Spirit could not come as the Comforter until Jesus went away.

We will suppose that in the providence of God any of you had a child or a dear friend at a distance, and that you had learned that that child or friend was lying in sickness. Suppose you were not able to visit him, but sent a messenger to learn how the case was: your messenger returns, and long before your messenger has spoken a word you discover by the flushed cheek, and the tearful eye, and the faltering step, and the countenance that will not look

up, and refuses (as it were) to give expression to its meaning, and utterance to the tongue—you discover that your child, your friend, is not recovered. Your messenger comes back, but your messenger brings no comfort. And what is the reason? It is not for want of will, it is not for want of power; but it is because the messenger hath no comfort to bring. The messenger as a truth-teller brings no comfort, for he tells you the physician has pronounced the case to be desperate—that he pronounces his remedies ineffectual; and therefore the more truth your messenger tells, the more are you grieved. But the next day you send the self-same messenger, and long before a word is uttered you discover by the speaking eye, by the erect attitude, by the tongue that speaks through the countenance—you discover, before a word has met the ear, that your child, your beloved friend, is well. The messenger is a comforter to-day, although he brought nought but sorrow yesterday. And why is he a comforter to-day? He is a truth-teller to-day as he was yesterday, and he was no comforter yesterday, and yet he is to-day. He is a comforter because he has comfort to bring.

Now even so the Spirit of the living God, so long as he comes as a Holy Spirit and as a truth-teller, never brings comfort to a sinner, because the very nature of truth-telling is, that sin lieth yet upon the world. But when he tells the world that God manifest in the flesh himself bore our sins in his own body on the tree—that he saw Jesus bearing the sins of all his people—that he saw him bow his head and give up the ghost—that he saw him conveyed to the tomb—and that having died for sin, he made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness; and O, when he tells the world that the Spirit of holiness as the Spirit of power accompanied the Son of God to glory above, and presented him with spotless humanity in the presence of the Father; when he telleth to the world that he the Eternal Spirit gave the Son of God to present himself a living man without spot to God—holy, harmless, undefiled—sympathizing with sinners, but separate from sin; when he telleth that he left the Son of God in the infinite bosom of the Father's love, with an eternal and unchangeable priesthood, making intercession for all his suffering children; O, when he telleth this to the Church, he is a Comforter: and he is a Comforter because he has comfort to bring; because he now tells to the *sin-sick* Church that her iniquities are pardoned, her transgressions forgiven, her diseases healed; because he now telleth to the *hungry* Church that Jesus is the manna that ever cometh from heaven; because he telleth to the Church *with parched lips* that Jesus is the smitten rock by the hand of death; because he telleth to the *darkened* Church that Jesus is the Sun of Righteousness ever looking down upon her; because he tells to the *ignorant* Church that Jesus is the demonstration of the wisdom of the Father, and that by the teaching of the Eternal Spirit he is ever sending to his Church the heavenly instruction of his word and his power.

It is thus that he cometh into the Church a Comforter and “another Comforter.” Jesus was a Comforter by faith in his visibility; Jesus was a Comforter by promise of the invisibility: but the Spirit of God is “another Comforter” by presenting heaven, which comes into the feelings, and the understandings, and the affections of the children of God. The Spirit of God which *testifies* of a crucified Saviour, testifies to the believer of a heaven above, the residence of God: and the Spirit of God that *witnesses* to the communion of the Father

and the Son in heaven, witnesses heaven begun in the soul of the believer by the residence of the Father and the Son, by the presence and the testimony of the Eternal Spirit.

Let this suffice for expounding this title, which is the office in which the Spirit is revealed as a *Comforter*.

Now let us consider the next title which the Spirit of God sustains: THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH.

What is the reason that *truth* is put immediately after *comfort*? The reason is very obvious. Remember what Christ said: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you. Not as the world giveth give I unto you." Now there are many ways in which the peace of Christ differeth from the world. The greatest amount of comfort in the world is always of Satan: that is, it is of a lie, of flattery. How many persons if you are sick will tell you you are getting well: and although the hopeless hectic flush is on your cheek, how ready will the learned leech be to tell you there is still hope, and feed you with false hope! They will allow no friendly tongue to whisper into your ear that you are a dying thing, and standing on the brink of eternity: and they will not let you be told that you hold mortality by a gossamer string which every breath of wind may snap asunder. They will comfort you by hiding the truth, or glossing over the truth, and endeavouring to convey, it may be, a well-meant comfort, but not a comfort extracted out of the truth of God.

Now you perceive, the Spirit being introduced into the Church from the throne of Jesus, where he sitteth at the right hand of God, is next presented to the Church as the Spirit of Truth, to shew the only way by which he does bring comfort, that is, by telling truth. Does he palliate the sinner's iniquity? Does he tell the sinner, "O, your sins are light as air; your sins are trifles; and your God will not call you to judgment?" Does he tell the sinner, "Your iniquity is only of small account, and the merciful God will not regard it?" No: he comes to the sinner, and he tells him truth. He tells him he is a dying sinner, a hell-deserving sinner. He tells him there is no soundness in him. He tells him he is on the very brink of eternity, and beyond him are the terrible judgments of God. And he tells him there is but one way of pardon—the shedding of the precious blood of the Son of God. He tells him that "the narrow way" is the only path that leads to life and to glory. He tells him that unless he is born again he cannot see, nor enter into, the kingdom of God. He tells him that unless through the spirit he shall mortify the deeds of the body, he cannot live. And it is by telling truth, and nothing but the truth, in the ear and to the heart of the Church, that the Spirit really brings comfort. For, after all, the world never gives peace by all its lies. After all, if the physician would give real comfort to the dying penitent, it would be by telling the truth. Perhaps the first word about dying would hurry the blood back to its citadel, the heart. Perhaps the first view of the grave, and the first view of the shroud, and the first meditating on the icy corpse, would freeze and curdle our blood. But for even the dying penitent to be assured he is dying is, after all, the shortest way to comfort: for when we are once thoroughly convinced we are dying creatures, we are prepared to seek that grace of God which will gird up the loins of our mind for the mighty and the terrible conflict: and when once we are convinced there is no earthly hope, we are

just prepared, like thirsty men, for drinking at the fountain of life. Hence it is the Spirit of God becomes a Comforter, and that the very next term that is given to him is the Spirit of Truth.

There is another reason why he is called the Spirit of Truth. It is, to shew to the natural man the only instrument that the Spirit of God ever employs. Every soldier, according to the direction of his commander, uses a particular weapon: every one, in an employment of a civil nature, is engaged in a particular way. So comparing heavenly things with earthly, the Spirit of God is armed with but one weapon; that weapon is truth—the truth concerning the Lord Jesus Christ—the truth of the entire Word of God, which is neither more nor less than the history of salvation, the history of Jesus in redeeming rebel sinners. The Spirit, therefore, when he acts on the soul of a believer, does not act in a way directly unintelligible and mysterious; the Spirit of the living God brings truth as a light and as a mirror. He brings it as a light; as it is written—"In thy light we shall see light." He brings it as a mirror in which we may see ourselves, the deformity of our own natural countenance; in which we may see to deck and ornament ourselves out of the garniture of God's Word. It is thus the object of the Spirit of God to employ but one instrument; and that instrumentality is (we shewed you) what we all require in this day and generation to understand, that the Spirit always addresses himself first to the intellectual part of man, that he occupies the understanding, that he furnishes it with proper garniture, even with truth; and that the Spirit of the living God out of the rational man maketh a spiritual man. He doth address himself to the natural man; and having imbued the mind of the man with truth, he maketh him a spiritual man: for what is a spiritual man if he is not a rational man led by truth—a rational man that knows the truth about sin, that knows the truth about the taking away of sin? He is only a rational man who knoweth the nature of misery, and who knoweth the nature of true happiness—which is, God dwelling in us by the testimony of Jesus.

This brings me to the last title that is here given to the Spirit, which you find in the twenty-sixth verse. "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things: and bring all things to your remembrance." Now this word "holy" is a particular title, and it has in it a very special meaning when applied to the Spirit. You know that truth in this world has very little holiness in it. The more truth I would tell you about this world, I would just tell you the less about holiness. Suppose God were to endow me for an hour with any portion of his omniscience, and I was enabled to open all the hearts that are in this great city, and to see through the darkness of this place, into all secret matters that are there: suppose I could tell you all the secrets of the prison-house of the heart of man; and suppose I could lay open what will be done at the judgment-seat of Christ, with every secret thing, whether it be good or bad: the more truth I would tell you about this city, the more sin I would tell you; just in proportion as I dealt out to you the page of truth, the more sin would I reveal. Nay, what is more, suppose I were thoroughly to know my own heart, and yours, and were to lay before you all our errors, and all our chambers of imagery—the more truth I would tell you, the more sin I would tell you about you and me. I would tell you what Paul has told us in one word—"O wretched man that I am!"

Now thus far you require to observe, that truth concerning this world is seldom a holy thing, and seldom calculated to produce holiness. For ignorance about the world is real bliss, and the less we know about the records of its transgression the happier are we.

But there is another point about truth that I would have you well to observe ; that the greater number of those truths about which the world runneth riot, and after which the world seeketh, have no holiness in them. Where is the holiness in the greater number of all philosophical investigations—when they speculate about mind, when they speculate about the body, when they analyze the objects that come to our hands, when they measure the destinies of the spirit, and weigh them in the balance of the sanctuary—when they calculate the rapidity of the comet, and tell you of its mighty wanderings—when they tell you of its departure, and when they calculate at the end of years its return ; what of holiness is there in all this ? There is truth in it all ; but it is generally a cold and a barren speculation, that instead of bringing men into contact with holiness and God, drives from them, alas, too often ! carrying them, like the devious and eccentric comets, away from their course, and away from their God.

But now you perceive, in opposition to all this, the Spirit which was first introduced into the Church as a Comforter, drawing his comfort from the going away of the Lord Jesus out of flesh by death, and the going of our Saviour in resurrection flesh, a holy flesh, to the right hand of God, in the exercise of his priestly office, there interceding for his Church ; out of this work of our Saviour the Holy Ghost was endowed, and, as it were, installed into the office of the Comforter. But then he did not come with a lie in his mouth to deceive us into an imaginary enjoyment ; but he came a Comforter, with words of truth : but now, after he has told us all truth, he is a Holy Spirit.

There is a point in this as a mere matter of worldly criticism to attend to. It is the fact, that in the Scriptures of eternal truth, there appears to be many stories, as it were, of evil recorded ; and some men wonder why God should have told them ; and other men charge the word of God with a tendency to pollute the mind. Ah ! fools and slow of heart that they are, to believe the Spirit of God would not have been a truth-teller, if he had not described the truth as it is. Fools and slow of heart that they are ! God, by the Spirit, does describe sin as it is ; but it is to teach men to hate it. He never describes sin as a lovely object ; but he always describes it as the image and product of Satan : he never describes sin as an attractive object, but he always describes sin as a repulsive object. He describeth its punishment to be in the place where “ the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched ; ” and he painteth to the eye, the God that ever liveth, and looketh, and to the hand of God that recordeth it with judgment, and to the eternal judgment of the righteous One that pursueth it with its deservings.

Now the Holy Spirit is thus described to us : and the meaning of holiness is simple ; it just signifies that which is separated to God. If you would understand it, you must first consider it as applied to an earthly object. The oil of the temple was holy, not because it originally differed from other oil, but because it was taken from ordinary purposes, and set apart to God. The golden vessels of the temple were holy, not because they were purer than other gold, but because they were set apart to God. So men are accounted holy

When they are dedicated to God. And the Spirit of God is called "the Holy Spirit," because he is dedicated, in all his mental energies, his intellectual energies, his spiritual energies, to setting forth the glory and the excellency of God. And what is the reason that he obtaineth to the Church the epithet of the *Holy Ghost*, the *Holy Spirit*? Ah! dear friends, it is because the unholiest thing between earth and heaven is spirit. O, there is nothing so unholy as a soul alienated from God. Flesh is a most unholy thing; but it is a truly corruptible thing, and it will dissolve into its primitive element of the dust, from which it was taken; and the condemnation of God will be enstamped in its dissolution. But the spirit that dwells in the bosom of an ungodly man, *that* is the unholy thing, for it is an immortal unholiness. Remember, moreover, the energies of the body are soon worn out by sin; but the energies of the soul, longing after sin, survive the body. And when men are lying on beds of sickness and torture, the spirit, the unholy spirit, that is within them, is longing after their evils; they are like the Israelites when they came out into the wilderness, when they were assailed by want and misery, their souls were worse than their bodies. They went back to Egypt, and they longed after the flesh-pots of Egypt; the flesh they had eaten, the vegetables which had pandered to their lusts and excited their appetites. Even so the most unholy of all things is an unholy understanding, an unholy body; the very image of God polluted into the image of the devil. That is really an unholy thing; and therefore it is, that the Spirit of the living God is at once brought before the Church as a *Holy Spirit*, to shew spirit in God, and of God, altogether separated from sin, and dedicated unto God.

I pray you, remember, how many matters make the body comparatively holy? I speak of outward holiness. Why you know there is not a body in this house that is not outwardly holy. We are all here in the house of God; and we have dedicated our hour to God's worship. We sit before God as God's people sit: we listen to the Word of God as God's people listen; we speak of God as God's prophets speak; we praise God as God's people praise. The word, the church, the very ordinances of this day, the Lord's day, have given the body an outward holiness. Ah! who knoweth what our spirits have been doing since we came into the charmed circle, as it were, of the outward holiness of the house of God? Our bodies are here, but our souls may have been at the ends of the earth: our bodies have been worshipping God, but our souls may have been bowing down to Moloch and to Baal. Our bodies have uttered, with our voices, prayer to the Eternal; but our souls may have been uttering imprecations, deep and dark, against the children of men. O, the body, aye, the body, may put on outward holiness because of the restraint of the world, while the spirit is revelling in all its abominations and sin, alienated from God. Therefore the Lord introduces the Spirit as holiness, to shew to the church how, in the very nature of that, as he comes unto the church, dedication to the Lord is the thing that is required, and not the mere outward service of the place, of the attitude, of the lip, and of the knee; but the inward service of the soul given up to God, and entirely yielded to his glory.

These things must suffice for our present word of instruction; let us improve by one or two thoughts, in a very few words, the thing that has now been spoken.

Now the first word of moment that I would endeavour to speak to your ear

and to your heart, is this, to ask, *Have you ever felt your need of the Spirit of God in his office of Comforter?* We all have our share of trouble in the world; but, O! when trouble comes we are like the king of Israel: we think of Egypt, the land of our slavery; we think of Assyria, the land of our captivity. There are those who run back upon the world for comfort; and those who look forward beyond the grave as a mere time of oblivion. Ah! dear friends, miserable comforters are they all; worse than the sad and irrational comforters of Job. Our past worldly enjoyments are Egypt; our escape by the grave is but the captivity of Assyria and Babylon. O, the true duty and privilege of Israel's king would have been, to draw nigh to God: the true privilege of the believer in trouble is, the Spirit testifying of the crucified Saviour, of the risen Saviour, of the reigning Saviour, the interceding Saviour, the judging Saviour: this is the comfort. O, then, whenever you are in sorrow, from any cause arising, neither go back to Egypt, to the world, nor look forward to the Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylon of death: but look to the Spirit of God, the Comforter, that dwelleth with you, and abideth with you, testifying of Jesus.

Secondly: *If you need comfort, do not deceive yourself by having recourse to a spirit of mere impression and of imagination:* but at once have recourse unto the Spirit of God as the Spirit of Truth. Look the truth of God in the face; look every truth in the face: look happiness in the face—look heaven in the face: O! above all, look the Judge, the Saviour, in the face. Be not deceived; there is no comfort plucked off the tree of life, but what arises from the root of death.

Finally: *Remember your desire in your affliction, from whatever source arising, to obtain comfort.* Remember it can but be obtained from the Holy Spirit. What was the reason that Israel fled before the enemy? Achan in the camp—the Babylonish garment, and the wedge of gold. One wedge of gold was the ruin of the army; one Babylonish garment smote down all the shields of Israel. And so one sin, one unholy imagination, cherished, preserved, protected, will be like Jonah's worm at the root of the gourd; it will be eaten away, it will wither, it will die. There is no comfort from the Holy Spirit but as a Spirit of Truth, and as he is holy. “Be ye *holy* as I am *holyholiness*, without which no man can see the Lord.” Be not deceived with the morality of this generation: there is no morality but holiness; and there is no holiness but when the Spirit of God taketh the things of Jesus and shews them to us, and abides within us, shewing them for ever.

May the Spirit be known in all his names, by all his attributes, and by all his gifts, and to the name of our God be the praise.

THE BLESSING OF THOSE WHO HEAR AND KEEP THE WORD OF GOD.

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REV. J. RUDGE, D.D.

HAWKCHURCH, APRIL 26 and MAY 3, 1835.

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"But Jesus said, Yea, rather blessed are they that hear the Word of God, and keep it."  
LUKE, xi. 28.

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I THINK it cannot be denied that there are few chapters in the Word of God which are more important than the one from which I have taken this text; first, because it contains that most beautiful prayer called the Lord's Prayer—a prayer which possesses the rare felicity and excellence of condensing in few but comprehensive words, every thing which can identify the case, and express the wants and desires of man, here and hereafter; and, secondly, because the chapter details the account of one of the most remarkable of the miracles which either the might or the mercy of Jesus ever performed.

Prayer was an exercise in which our Lord was constantly employed; and by his engaging example, we are enlightened and instructed in the performance of this most necessary and important duty. It appears that on a certain occasion upon which he had ceased from praying and communing with God, he was solicited by one of his disciples to prescribe a form of prayer which might be applicable to every condition of life, and fit for every description of character, and for every future generation of men to use. The result of this application was, that Jesus taught his disciples that form of sound words which we designate from him by the title of our *Lord's Prayer*; and, I think, that it is not improbable that it contains the substance of what he himself was wont to use, and perhaps *had* used in "the certain place," and at the very time, in which the application had been made by *one*, in the name, it may be, of *all* his other disciples. Whether or no this *was* the case, is not important; it is only a probable conjecture of my own, and, therefore, entitled to little weight. But the fact is, whenever we pray, we have *his* sanction and authority for the use of this inimitable prayer.

After assuring us that the munificent Being to whom this and every other petition are addressed, will give us every good thing for which we pray in the Holy Spirit, the account of the very remarkable miracle to which I have above alluded, is detailed. "He was casting out a devil, and it was dumb;" or, in other words, a dumb demoniac, to whom he gave, or restored, the organ of speech. The people, when they saw this phenomenon—that is, the expulsion of the devil from the person so possessed, and the faculty of speech imparted to the dumb man, wondered. Before the coming of our Lord, the devil had been permitted to exercise a tyrannical power over the bodies of men, from which it was one object of his advent to rescue them, and to establish upon the ruins of that power the kingdom of God and his Christ.

But upon this point I am not now to insist. The miracle here recorded—the cure of this demoniac—was a powerful demonstration, and a convincing evidence of our Lord's divinity, seeing that by a word only he cast out and expelled this unclean spirit. But here we behold the force and the baneful effects of prejudice. The Pharisees, by whom the phenomenon was witnessed, and by whom, therefore, the fact of the miracle could not be denied, instead of magnifying the divine power by which it had been wrought, maliciously ascribed it to the aid and assistance of Beelzebub, and accused the holy Jesus of being in league and confederacy with the prince of devils: a monstrous supposition, which implies that the devil made over and delegated his own power for the purpose of its ruin and demolition; or, as our Lord justly argued, that he lent it for the express object of waging war upon himself\*. Our Lord having refuted this improbable supposition and vile calumny, by the strongest arguments and the most triumphant reasoning, and having sufficiently demonstrated that it was not from Satan but from God himself that he derived his power of working miracles, one of the multitude, and a woman, too, upon whose heart malice and prejudice had made no impression, ravished with the justness as well as the beauty of the things he had uttered, and indignant, perhaps, at the treatment he received, lifted up her voice, and said unto him, “Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked!” in other words, “Blessed, and highly-favoured among women is the mother that bare thee—who may now be truly called the Prophet of the Highest, the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth!” Then occurs the text, or the reflection made by Christ in answer to this pious remark of this female: “But he said, Yea, rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it!”

It will now be my object, from this text of Scripture, to deduce the instruction with which it abounds, and endeavour to shew you, first, the necessity of knowing the Word of God; to point out, secondly, how that knowledge is to be acquired; and to impress upon your minds, thirdly, that it is not sufficient to know, and to hear the Word of God, but that you must also keep it, and do it. Lastly, I shall suggest some reflections on the blessedness and happiness which they shall experience by whom this divine Word is heard and kept. I need scarcely observe that so many points, or divisions as I have mentioned, will embrace a wide field of observation, and that the limits of a single sermon will hardly admit of that ample examination to which a text, so full of important matter, is entitled. Therefore, not to overburthen your memories, and to occupy too much of your attention, I shall the better consult your improvement by making each head the subject of a separate discourse. This I shall do, and, with respect to each, I shall make it my devout and ardent petition to God, that, by his good Spirit, he would open the eyes of your understanding to see the wonders of his law—that he would open your ears to divine instruction; your hearts to receive knowledge; and impart to you celestial aid to perform his righteous commandments! Even so, Lord Jesus, let it be!

I am, first, to shew you THE NECESSITY OF YOUR KNOWING THE WORD OF GOD

\* See Horsley Vol. i. Sermon x.

Now to know God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, is life eternal. But how shall we know God unless he be revealed to us? For how can a finite mind conceive and comprehend a Being that is infinite? From the works of nature, and of Providence, we may indeed be led to the belief of a God, and also discern that he is possessed of those attributes of infinite power, and wisdom, and goodness, &c. which we ascribe to him. It must, however, be confessed, that all the knowledge to which we attain of God from nature is exceedingly imperfect and deficient; as is abundantly evident from the state of the world before it was blessed with the sacred writings; and from the state in which it remains at this day in those countries in which the Holy Scriptures are literally a Gospel hid, and a book sealed. Then, and there, we learn what unbecoming, what mean, and what degraded notions men entertained of God and his government. But, allowing that "the invisible things of him *may* be seen and understood from the creation of the world, even his eternal power and God-head," yet, from thence we should never have learned any thing of Jesus Christ the Redeemer; or of what he hath done to ransom us from misery, and to purchase for us life and salvation. It was, therefore, requisite for our happiness, that God should give us some clearer revelation of himself. Now this he *has* done by his Word, which he has declared to the world, and by which we are instructed in the knowledge of every thing necessary for us to know. By these Sacred Oracles we are informed who, and what this Saviour of sinners is; what he has done and what he has suffered for our sakes; what return he requires us to make; what we may expect from his kindness, if we follow him in the road of duty; and what we have to fear from his avenging justice, if we refuse to hearken to his voice—if we disobey his commandments, violate his laws, and do those things which he has forbidden. Surely knowledge like this is necessary to be revealed to all who would obtain life eternal. "Whatsoever things were written," saith the Apostle, "were written for our learning." "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works." If we would *know* our Master's will, and do it, we must consult the oracles of truth; and if we would be *saved*, we must "know the Holy Scriptures which are able to make us wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

I need scarcely mention how that God, in numberless places of Scripture, has expressly commanded the reading and studying of his Word. From a great number of well-known passages in reference to this duty, I shall select a few; and this selection is made as much to refresh your memories, as to stimulate your practice. Hear the command which God gave to his ancient people of Israel, Deuteronomy, vi. 6—9: "These words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart. And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them, when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house and on thy gates." "Search the Scriptures," saith the Divine Teacher. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom" saith St. Paul to the Colossians. "Blessed is the man," saith David, whose

"delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth meditate day and night." This sentiment he could utter from experience—the lessons and the practice of the teacher were in beautiful harmony together; and we need only to read Psalm cxix. to be convinced that the law of God was all his joy, his pleasure, his food, his light, his comfort, his consolation, his only treasure upon earth.

Of the same mind were the ancient fathers of the Church, who in their sermons and writings most earnestly recommended and enjoined the reading and studying of the Holy Scriptures, as they contained every thing necessary and suitable for us in every state and condition of life—in the season of prosperity as well as in the hour of mourning and of sorrow. They represent the Word of God as the food, the strength, the ornament, the light, the medicine, the health, and safety of the soul; as the water which washes out all our stains, and as the fountain from which all our blessings flow; as the inexhaustible magazine from which the foolish may draw the true wisdom; where the captive may find deliverance, the sick a physician, and the mourning spirit a healing balm. Hear the language of the eloquent Chrysostom: "I exhort you always, and I shall never cease to exhort you, never to be content with the instructions given here, but to read with assiduity the Holy Scriptures, when at home, in your houses; and let no person plead such shameful and ridiculous excuses as these: I am deeply engaged in business; I am taken up with the affairs of the public; I am a tradesman who must gain my bread with my labour; I have a wife and children to care for, and my time must be employed in providing for my family; I am a man of the world, and it is not my business to read the sacred Scriptures—that belongs to such as have sequestered themselves from the world, and retired to the mountains and the deserts, and who lead a life suitable to their state. Poor men! What do you tell me? Is it because you are divided and distracted with an infinite variety of cares, that it belongs not to you to study the holy Scriptures? On the contrary, those very occupations should be strong reasons for your studying them the more, and for causing you to be more careful in meditating upon them, than even those persons who have retired from the world for the purpose of having it in their power to serve God without interruption," &c.

It is a certain truth, my brethren, that one great cause, to which our falling so frequently into sin may be ascribed is, a want of attention to the duties incumbent upon us. Now it is evident that if we were to make it our daily practice to meditate upon the Word of God, we should have our duty continually before us. We should have the promises and the threatenings of the Almighty ever before our eyes: this would necessarily produce such an impression upon our hearts, as to make us fear and dread all iniquity, and to turn from the sins to which we are naturally inclined, and most strongly addicted. Allow me to recommend this holy practice to you, my friends. Suffer no day to pass without some portion of it being devoted to the reading and the study of God's holy Book; and let not any business or pleasure interfere with this necessary employment. I say *necessary*, because without it all the instructions of the preacher, and all the attendance upon the temple, will be in vain—without it the heart will remain unchanged, the life unreformed, the inclination to sin unrestrained, and the habit and the disposition to virtue unformed. Search the Scriptures; yea, I say with our Lord, "Search

the Scriptures ;" for they testify of God as the way, the truth, and the life ; and blessed is the man who doth meditate day and night in the law of the Lord.

I now proceed, secondly, to point out more particularly HOW THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE WORD OF GOD, so necessary to our salvation, IS TO BE ACQUIRED.

The two chief means for the attainment of divine knowledge are the *reading* of God's holy Word, and the *hearing* of it preached. That the reading of God's Word is necessary, is evident even from this consideration alone, that there is no state or condition in life in which it is not of the highest use and importance. In it we find the most powerful and encouraging motives to the practice of every virtue, and the most formidable arms against every vice. It is the blessed Word of God which regulates our thoughts, and words, and actions, which sets a proper bound to our desires, which moderates our fears, which exalts our hopes, which extinguishes our hatred, represses our envy, humbles our pride, restrains our ambition, calms our angry passions, confounds our impious imaginations ; which alleviates our troubles, and sweetens the bitterest cup of affliction ; which is our only source under the loss of endeared friends and the death of beloved relatives. It is this divine Word that discovers to us our origin, and the end for which we were made. It makes us to see the deformity of sin, and the comeliness and beauty of holiness. It gives us to know where true happiness, durable riches, unfading honours, and soul-satisfying pleasures are to be found, and raises our hearts to the love of heavenly and eternal blessings. In fine, it is this that supports our faith, strengthens our hope, and increases our love to God and divine things.

The Sacred Scriptures are the great means of converting sinners, and of building up saints in their holy faith. History is full of conversions which the reading and hearing of God's Word have occasioned. That eminent father of the Church, Augustin, tells us that he owed his conversion to the reading of these words in St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, xiii. 11 : " And that knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep : for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand : let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly as in the day ; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof." Others have been converted from the hearing and the reading of these words : " Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." " In the beginning was the word." Another in reading the Acts of the Apostles ; and another from these words of St. Paul to Timothy, " This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." And I hope I may be permitted to mention, that I know some ministers whose minds have been seriously impressed, and whose diligence and zeal have been most sensibly inflamed and quickened in their pastoral office and in their Master's service, by these awful words of the prophet Ezekiel : " If the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned ; if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity ; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand !"

Since such have been, and still are, the blessed and happy effects produced by consulting the sacred Oracles, surely it is not only the *duty*, but the *interest* of every Christian, who would increase in that wisdom that maketh wise unto salvation, not to let a day pass without reading some particular chapter, and meditating on some select passage of the Word of God.

How earnest and pressing in this matter, the most enlightened and most learned among the teachers of Christianity have been, we may learn from these words of Augustin. "Believe it for certain," saith he, "that as it fares with the *body*, when it hath tasted food but once in several days, so is it with the *soul*, when it is not frequently fed with the word of God. For, as hunger and a want of nourishment render our *body* parched and emaciated; so the *soul* that neglects to strengthen itself with the bread of God's word, becomes feeble, dried up, and unfit for any good work." Then, after making other reflections of the like character, he concludes, "If any man is so exceedingly busied that he cannot find time to read the holy Scriptures before his meals, let him not neglect to read some part thereof when taking them; to the end that, at the same time, while his body is nourished with material food, his soul may be nourished with the word of God; and that the whole man, external and internal, may go away from the table, having received holy and salutary nourishment. For if we feed the body only, and keep back the food of God's word from the soul, we then feed the slave, and suffer the mistress to pine away with hunger. And you cannot be ignorant how cruel and unjust such conduct is!" It is the fashion of some to depreciate the writings of the fathers: I, on the contrary, hold them in the highest veneration and esteem; and I know of no works that I have read, which contain sounder maxims of truth and practical wisdom, nor any from which I have derived more lively pleasure, and more solid improvement; and I am always happy when I recollect any passage, by which I can embellish my own sermons, and illustrate my own teaching.

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works." The inspired writings of the Old and New Testament, contain the *whole* will of God necessary to be known for our salvation. They contain that wisdom which is infinitely superior to all the wisdom of this world—to all our boasted attainments in human science, and all our advancement in human knowledge; for they were dictated by the unerring Spirit of God, and penned by the most highly gifted of men. Such were Moses, David, Solomon—the prophets, the apostles, and evangelists; of whom all were distinguished as much for their wisdom, by which they taught, as for the piety in which they lived. In their nature the Scriptures are most perfect, pure, deep, and unchangeable, containing every thing essential for faith and practice. No other writings bring such glory to God, or possess such power and efficacy in convincing the minds, and in converting the souls of sinners—in bringing them to glory here, and in preparing them for blessedness hereafter! If such be their mighty and magnificent effects, how necessary to be known, and studied, and understood of men!

Every part of Scripture, as being of Divine inspiration, ought to be thoroughly studied, and inwardly digested; though, doubtless, there are some books and chapters which claim our meditations, and require our studious perusal, more than others. In the Old Testament, we ought particularly to read the book of

Genesis, and the first twenty chapters of Exodus, in which there is an account of the creation of the world, and the first foundation of the Church. I would next specify the book of Psalms, which is a source of the sweetest consolation, and adapted to the state and circumstances of every believer; the Proverbs of Solomon, which contain the most beautiful morality, and the sagest maxims of truth and wisdom; the book of Ecclesiastes, which teaches us the vanity of the world, and the unsatisfactoriness of terrestrial enjoyments; the prophecies of Isaiah, and some of the other prophets, in which we find the clearest, most graphic, and most admirable predictions of the divine Saviour of sinners, with the calling of the Gentiles to the belief of Him, in whom all the nations of the earth shall be blessed. In the New Testament we should read with particular attention, the Gospels—the eighth chapter of the epistle to the Romans—the epistle to the Ephesians—the epistles of James, of Peter, and John.

But, that we may reap real benefit and advantage from the perusal of the sacred Oracles, it is necessary that, like the Ethiopian eunuch, we should read them with care and application, as containing the true knowledge of salvation. We must read them, with the highest reverence and respect, as the work of God, and the word of Him by whom we shall be judged in the great day of final account. It behoves us to read them, not with the spirit of a sceptic, or the levity of a libertine, who reject what they cannot comprehend, and ridicule what they know and feel is so condemnatory of their every habit and practice; but with a soul penetrated with the most reverential ideas of that infinite and adorable Being, whose essence feeble and finite creatures cannot pierce or understand. Nor are we to read them for the sake of satisfying a vain and profitless curiosity; but for the purpose of having our minds improved, our views enlarged, our acquaintance with God and heavenly things increased and sanctified. We must read also the holy Book of God, with an earnest and anxious solicitude to retain it in our memories—to store our minds with its saving truths, so that from the excellent abundance thereof we may be able to bring forth things new and old, suited to every exigence, and adapted to every varied state and condition of life. We should try to sound the Scripture depth; for although we are not to attempt to penetrate into the mysteries which it conceals from our mental grasp and comprehension, for then they would cease to be mysteries, yet we should endeavour to know as perfectly as possibly we can, that which it teaches us, to refresh our souls with the truths it reveals, as well as adore the sacred character of such as at present eludes our research and baffles our inquiry. We should carefully weigh every word, and ponder every expression, and compare one part of Scripture with another, as one of the best and happiest methods for clearing apparent obscurities, and reconciling seeming discrepancies and differences; and thus making the grand and mighty *whole* profitable for purity in doctrine, and for instruction in righteousness.

What has been said concerning the reading of the holy Scriptures, and the meditating thereupon, may be applied to preaching, and prove the necessity of hearing them explained and enforced. Ministers are ambassadors for Christ; and by them God, our Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, beseeches us to be reconciled to him, whom we have offended by our sins. It is his word that they speak; and it is through the instrumentality of that word, that God works faith in our hearts; as saith St. Paul, “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” As sin entered into the heart of man by the ear, so

infinite wisdom has thought it good that the antidote should enter by the same organ, and be the avenue by which it is conveyed to the heart.

As to the manner and dispositions with which we are to hear the word preached, it is only necessary to remark, that we should hear it with the most sincere and hearty desires of deriving profit and instruction from this means of grace, and this portion of public service; and there is no sermon, however indifferent, from which some solid truth and some useful hint may not be derived. We should listen to the word preached with attention of mind, and with application of spirit. We should hear it in faith, as the infallible oracles of truth, and the word of Him that cannot lie. We should hear it so as to retain it in our minds, and reduce it to practice. It is a mark and character of a real Christian, that he hears, and understands, and remembers the word of God. His heart resembles good soil, upon which the good seed is sown, which it cherishes, causes to grow up, and bring forth much fruit. It is the golden pot that receives and preserves the celestial manna. In a word, if we would read and hear God's word so as that it may be rendered a productive source of mental and practical improvement, we must read and hear it as though it were addressed personally to ourselves. We must apply and appropriate it to our individual case, and particular circumstances; and when we hear, consider it as saying to each of us, "Thou art the man!" When we read the life and actions of this or that person, we should consider what we would have done, had we been placed in their situation; and when we read either of promises vouchsafed, or of threatenings denounced, in God's word, we should carefully inquire whether we come under the description of those to whom the former are made, and the latter are extended; and so conduct ourselves, as in the strength of God, to secure the blessings of the Gospel on the one hand, and avoid the curses and denunciations of the law on the other.

In fine, my brethren, let me, with all the warmth and affection of a friend, exhort you never to neglect prayer, in imitation of your blessed Master, but always to make it precede and accompany your hearing and reading of God's word. Before you engage in either, beseech God to give you an enlightened heart, and an attentive mind, to open your eyes to see the wonders of his law; your understandings, as he formerly did those of the disciples, to understand the Scriptures. I would recommend you to make this petition, before you approach the gates, and while you join in the beautiful prayers of your church. This advice followed, I would next advise you, after the reading and hearing of the word, to pray unto God, that it may be a lamp unto your path, and a light unto your feet—to illumine your understandings, and dispel the mists of intellectual darkness. Pray unto the Lord, that his word may be as fire to warm your souls with holy affections—as a two-edged sword to slay your old man, and as good seed to bring forth in you good fruit unto life everlasting! May these rich and magnificent effects be produced for your salvation and blessedness, now and hereafter! "We beseech thee to hear us good Lord."

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NOTHING is more common among men, and, I think, not without reason, than to hold in ridicule those who boast much, and do little. This was the character of the Pharisee in the Gospel; and in like execration are all of this generation, whose conduct in life affords a practical contradiction to the lofty

pretensions of their lips. Indeed, it is of the very essence of Christianity, that its professors should be meek in their spirits and humble in their views; and I consider it as no breach of the blessed rule of Christian charity, to conclude that those who boast much of their spiritual attainments will perform little. We read of no pretensions advanced by the humble publican; the simple admission of his being a sinner was all that he uttered. This confession bespoke the character of his mind, and the rectitude, and, permit me to add, the spirituality of his views. That he found acceptance with God, whoshall doubt? I say, that he was justified in his sight, rather than the other, for "whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased, and whosoever humbleth himself shall be exalted." And this is in harmony both with the canon of Scripture, with the rule of equity, and the right deductions of reason and truth. My brethren, to *know* and to *act* are two different things; and, although knowledge and practice ought always to go hand in hand together, and the one to be a lucid and beautiful reflection of the other, yet, in general, it is far from being the case. On observing this palpable want of harmony and consistency, an ancient heathen exclaimed, "O God! all the Greeks know virtue admirably well; but the Lacedemonians alone practise it!" Great abilities should always be accompanied with a good conscience and superior knowledge with shining virtues. It may well be asked, Of what use is the one, without the possession of the other? What is knowledge, in any department of science, and I will add, in any of the writings of God, unless it renders us the wiser and better, and it be converted to a practically good and holy purpose? A man may know all that the Bible contains—may know the contents of every chapter, and the bearing of every passage—may be able to quote Scripture with facility, so that the ignorant may gaze, and the simple ones wonder; and yet all this knowledge be as a thing of nought, if he be not wise in this acquisition of the mind, and this tenacity of the memory. In truth, knowledge and wisdom are two distinct things, and the poles are not wider apart than is the one from the other! Let us not, while we may advance in knowledge, retrograde in wisdom. No knowledge upon earth is so honourable and useful as the knowledge of God, and the concerns of a future world; and it is absolutely requisite for all, who would attain to immortal glory, and endless felicity in the life to come.

This necessary knowledge is only to be found in the word of God, the Scriptures of truth, and the oracles of divine inspiration. How is this knowledge to be sought and obtained? The answer is, as I endeavoured to shew you in my preceding sermon on this text, by reading God's word—by meditations thereon, and by hearing it preached and explained. But knowledge, acquired of this kind, and through this instrumentality, will be of little avail, unless reduced to practice; for, it is not sufficient to know our Master's will, if we do not perform it! This, perhaps, you bear in mind, was the point to which I promised to draw your attention in this sermon, as the third general head of the discourse on this text, or reflection of our Lord. I stated the occasion upon which it was spoken, and a word further it is unnecessary to add on this part of the subject. I proceed at once, then, to the point of present consideration, allowing me first to importune God, that he would so open the eyes of our understanding, to see the wonders of his law, that our hearts may receive instruction, and that such a measure of celestial aid may be imparted, as that we may not only hear the Word of God, but keep it!

Thirdly, THAT THE READING AND HEARING OF THE WORD OF GOD ARE NOT SUFFICIENT FOR SALVATION, UNLESS IT BE REDUCED TO PRACTICE, is evident from these words of our Lord Jesus Christ himself. Matt. vii. 24 " Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man that built his house upon a rock : and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house ; and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man which built his house upon the sand : and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it." To this truth, so forcibly illustrated by our Lord, the apostle James bears testimony, saying, " Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way; and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the word, this man shall be blessed in his deed." If this be not a plain and sensible mode of inculcating and illustrating Christian truth, I know not what is, and it can scarcely fail to be remarked, that it must have a practical influence, wherever a man is disposed to make of religion a serious concern, and, instead of wasting his time in speculations on the mysterious tenets, is determined to keep and observe the plain precepts of the Word of God.

From the above, then, we see the necessity, not only of hearing the Word of God, but also of practising that Word, and obeying each of the commandments of the law and the Gospel. When either a father of a family, or a master of a household, or the king of a country issue their commands, what other conclusion can be drawn, but that their orders should be executed, and their authority be obeyed ? Justly may they consider themselves as mocked and insulted, if those, to whom they are addressed, should contravene the one, and fail to respect the other. Now in each of these characters, God is known to us. As our Father, he has prescribed to us our duty as children ; as our Lord and Master, he has imposed his commands upon us as servants ; and as our King he has enacted laws and statutes for us as his subjects ; in these respective characters, he naturally expects that they should be observed and honoured. And as he has made the richest and most precious promises to those who obey his commandments, so has he denounced the severest judgments against those who rebel against his laws, and refuse to comply with his enactments. The King of kings has not given us his Word as a painting upon which we are merely to look, or as a mirror in which we are only to view our blemishes ; but as an unerring rule by which our actions must be regulated, and as a law, to which our obedience must be prompt and implicit. At the great day of account, therefore, it will not be asked, What do you know ? but, What have you done ? The plea of ignorance cannot then be advanced. You had the law and the prophets, why did you not observe the one, and hear the other ? The Judge of all flesh will not say, " Come ye blessed of my Father, for ye have read and heard my Word," but, " Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world : for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat : I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink : I was a stranger and ye took

me in : naked, and ye clothed me : I was sick, and ye visited me : I was in prison, and ye came unto me." " If ye know these things,"—these commandments of love, and these offices of charity, saith the Saviour of sinners, " happy are ye if ye do them: for it is not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." And he elsewhere adds, " That servant, which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes."

Hence, my brethren, it is clear, that it will not avail us to know our Lord's will, if we refuse to act in implicit obedience to it: nor will it profit us to keep sacred some, while we violate others, of God's commandments. It will be of no benefit to us that we are not envious, malicious, and avaricious, while, at the same time, we are intemperate, sensual, and ambitious. It will be no excuse for us that we put not forth our hand against our neighbour's property and life, if we rob him of his good name, and blast his fair character and reputation—if we withhold from him what is necessary to supply his wants, and relieve his necessities ; to succour him in misery, and comfort him in adversity : for these are works of charity, of which the examination is to be close and specific in the day of judgment, as appears from the passage I have just read to you, and, according to St. James, " Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." Whatever God commands we ought to do, without consulting with flesh and blood. Provided we are satisfied that such and such a thing is the will of heaven, we must do it without mooting a question as to the equity of the command, and the reasonableness of the duty. *A thus saith the Lord* should insure our instant obedience, and enkindle our best affections.

I will illustrate this point by the example of the father of the faithful. When commanded to offer up his only son Isaac in sacrifice, he hesitated not a moment, but hastened to act in obedience to what he felt was the divine will and commandment, although the sacrifice was the severest to which his faith as a believer, and his affections as a parent, could be subjected. The prophet Isaiah refused not to walk naked and barefoot, during the space of three years, when commanded to do it, " for a sign and a wonder upon Egypt, and upon Ethiopia." Nor did Ezekiel refuse to prepare his bread with the dung of cows, and to eat it for three hundred and ninety days, for a sign of famine and want to the sinful inhabitants of Jerusalem. Hence we infer that implicit should be our obedience to all the commandments of God, of which there is not one that is not perfectly consistent with the soundest reason, and the strictest morality. If we examine them with the utmost attention, we shall find them worthy of the divine Legislator who enacted them, and the observance of them conducive to our best interests and advantages in this life. If we would wish to secure the approbation of God, our obedience must be a ready and cheerful obedience. As soon as we ascertain his will—and what more easy?—we should be prompt to obey it. We must hear his voice to-day, and not harden our hearts. Remember how the blessed Jesus treated those who did not immediately comply with his call. *One* only asked permission to go and bury his father; and *another* for liberty to go and bid farewell to them who were at his house ; and yet he would not suffer them afterwards to follow him. It is *his* will, that as soon as the invitation is given, and the call is made, like Peter and Matthew, and the sons of Zebedee, they should leave their father, their nets, and their

gain, and follow him. And this prompt and instant compliance does he exact from all who now profess to be his disciples. Heartless and constrained devotion will never be acceptable unto God; nor does Christ desire any to come after him who are not willing to deny themselves, to renounce the world, and take up his cross. His service must not only be a pleasure—it must be our *greatest* pleasure, and our most delightful employment. And, although the cup which he gives us to drink may be mixed with myrrh and vinegar, and be composed of the bitterest ingredients, yet it becomes us to drink it without any reluctance of mind, and any murmur of complaint, remembering that the gall and wormwood, however grievous to the taste, will be conducive to the moral health and purity of the soul, and afterwards yield the most gracious and salutary effects!

In the moral law, or the ten commandments which the Lord Jehovah gave to his people of Israel by the hand of his servant, Moses, our duty to God and our neighbour is comprehended. These laws are of perpetual obligation; and no revolution of years or change of circumstances in the condition of society, can ever be permitted to lower their importance, or abrogate their observation. One and all of them must be obeyed in the strictest letter, and in the most uncompromising spirit. Human laws may admit of modification and alteration, and those which were enacted as suitable to the condition of society in one age, become susceptible of a judicious revision, and ought to be adapted to the more enlightened habits and intelligence of succeeding ages. Reforms, like those that are now taking place in Parliament, are rendered necessary by the change of times, and exigences of circumstances. But not so the laws of God. Founded upon the basis of truth, which is unchangeable in all ages, they admit of no change, and are the standing and perpetual obligations in all periods of the world, and among all generations of men. It may not, then, be an improper or uninstructive employment to offer a few suggestions upon their nature and character, in order that their sense may be more clearly seen, and their meaning more distinctly understood.

Let us observe, then, that in those commandments which are *negative*, that is, expressed in terms of negation, the affirmative is, at the same time, comprised: and in those which are *affirmative*, the negative is always comprehended. For example: the sixth commandment, "Thou shalt not kill," which is negatively expressed, contains in it an affirmative, or positive commandment, which is, to preserve and protect our own lives, and the lives of others; and by every lawful means to defend them when unjustly attacked. The fifth commandment, "Honour thy father and thy mother," which is affirmative, or positive, includes in it a prohibition to do any thing by which they may be dishonoured in their authority, or afflicted in their spirits.

We may also observe, that in all the *general* commandments, the *particular* ones are included; and in the *particular*, the *general* commandments are also comprised. For instance: the eighth commandment, "Thou shalt not steal," which is a general prohibition against every species of theft, contains in it a forbidding of all the ways and means by which the crime may be perpetrated, our neighbour may be defrauded, and his property may be injured. In the ninth commandment, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour," which is a *particular* prohibition, is comprehended also a *general* one against every species of lying and falsehood, by which we may malign the character and injure the reputation of our brethren, by words and sayings.

We may likewise remark, that when any one particular sin is forbidden, every thing which has the slightest approximation or affinity to that sin, is also prohibited. For instance : when we are forbidden to murder our neighbour, the prohibition extends beyond the atrocious act of imbruing the hands in the blood of a brother ; we are at the same time forbidden to commit any act of personal violence, such as to strike, to beat, or hurt him, or even to quarrel with him, unless we have a just and valid reason. Christianity is a religion of the heart and the affections, and it lays the restraint there, where issues the first conception of whatever is criminal in thought and atrocious in deed. Quarrels, therefore, between brethren, are included in the general prohibition, on account of the passions they enkindle, the feuds they perpetuate, and the crimes in which they not uncommonly terminate. When we are commanded to "remember the Sabbath-day, and keep it holy;" we are, at the same time, enjoined to attend upon the worship and service of God in his sanctuary ; to assemble with his people, and to present our united prayers and praises to Him ; to join in the beautiful liturgy of the Church ; to read God's sacred Word, and to hear it preached with reverence and attention ; so that we may thereby become wiser and better in the current of our thoughts, and in the disposition of our lives, and thus advance the eternal felicity of our precious and immortal souls.

We may likewise observe, that when any particular sin is forbidden, the use of every thing which leads us to the commission of that sin, is also included in the prohibition : and, on the contrary, when any virtue is commanded, every thing that has a tendency to dispose our minds to the practice, and assist us in the performance, of that particular virtue, is, at the same time, implied in the injunction. Thus, when God forbids murder and adultery, he also forbids drunkenness, and the entertainment of loose and lascivious imaginations, immodest gestures, unchaste words, and every thing, in short, of which the direct and certain tendency is to enkindle and inflame the fire of passion, of lust, and revenge, in our corrupt and wicked hearts. The look, even, with our Lord constitutes often the criminality ; and guilt is incurred before the bare act is committed, and the individual crime is perpetrated. If what I have just said of our religion be true, that it is a religion of the heart, how circumspect and watchful should we be in training and disciplining it to the habit of virtue, and the ways of wisdom and truth !

The law of God, therefore, takes not cognizance only of our external actions : it reaches and it extends itself also to the actions of our inner man, regulating the thoughts and intentions of the heart. For instance : When God forbids us to kill and murder our neighbour, he forbids us to wish for his death, or desire his hurt. And when we are forbidden to take his name in vain, we are also forbidden to murmur against his providence in secret, and to entertain rash and unbecoming thoughts concerning the equity of his dealings, and the mysteries of his government.

These observations are necessary, my brethren ; and they demand from us particular attention, that we deceive not our own souls. There is another point, also, which deserves our serious consideration. It is our duty to keep all the commandments of God *always*—not on this day only, but at all times ; not on one day, but on every day of the week ; at all hours, upon all seasons of our lives. What does our Christian duty prescribe ? Why this : that we should persevere in our obedience to the law and the Gospel, even unto the

end. They only who continue faithful unto death, shall receive the crown of life. And they only, when the time of their dissolution is at hand, can, with the great Apostle of the Gentiles, say, “ I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith : henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day : and not *to me only*, but unto *all* them also that love his appearing,” and have kept his commandments.

To the observations which I have already made, permit me to add a few more distinctions, which are exceedingly necessary for the information of your minds, and the proper government of your thoughts and actions.

When *two* of the divine commandments, the one respecting the glory of God, and the other the good of our neighbour, come in competition, it may be asked, which of them ought we rather to obey? There can surely be no room for hesitation—that, doubtless, which regards the glory of God. For, when we cannot execute the commandments which regard our neighbour, without violating those which regard the honour of our Creator, then, certainly we should rather violate the former than infringe on the latter. Now is it not only very possible, but certain also, that these duties may come in collision one with the other? For instance, God has commanded us to obey our parents; but, at the same time, he has enjoined us not to lie, nor steal. Now, if a father or a mother should so far forget their parental obligations to their children, and their duty to their God, as to issue their injunctions to their offspring to tell a falsehood for any particular purpose, or commit a theft\* upon the property of another person, in such a case—(and the world is not without instances of the kind, in which juvenile delinquents have been trained up by their parents to every species of vice, and every mode of trickery, as the criminal records of this metropolis, and as even our own experience will attest)—in such a case, the line of duty and the course of conduct to be pursued admit not of a moment’s hesitation to decide. God must be obeyed. Dishonour and disobey the parents rather than dishonour God. For, saith Christ, “ He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me.” Again,

Should a moral and a ceremonial commandment come in competition, the preference is equally plain and obvious. The latter must in every case yield to the former—the moral must be observed and regarded before the ceremonial, if I may be allowed to borrow a similitude from the Psalmist, like the right-hand of the Lord, it must have the pre-eminence. I desired “ mercy and not sacrifice,” saith God, by the mouth of his servant Hosea; by which he intimated, that the exercise of mercy, of charity, and compassion, is more grateful and acceptable unto him, than thousands of burnt-offerings. And the same reflection may be made respecting the forms and ceremonies of religion. No system of public worship can, perhaps, subsist without them. They are excellent in their place, especially when they are simple in their character, and unpretending in their appearance. But any reliance upon them, as a substitute for the observance of the precepts, and the neglect of the spirituality of religion, is highly offensive in the sight of God. They ought to be observed, but only in due subordination and subserviency to the spirit of the law, the letter of which killeth, when unaccompanied by that which giveth life, and animation, and beauty, and consistency to the whole. No church can possess a more

\* See also Deut. xiii.—It has lately been proved by Sir Robert Peel in the House of Commons, that in the course of twenty years, crimes have increased in England about fourfold.

beautiful liturgical service than our own, and our forms and ceremonies of devotion are on the whole unexceptionable in their kind. But they are without their edifying effect, and their intended influence, if used as mere words of course, and as mere formularies of devotion. It ceases to be a service of the heart, whenever it fails to interest and warm the affections, and to fix and improve the heart. It is then an observance of the letter without the substance, of the form without the spirit; and such a ceremonial sacrifice is, we may be assured, one which the Lord desireth not. The sacrifices of God, even amid the forms of devotion, and the pomp of rituals, are a broken spirit—"a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise!" "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord. I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts." That is, "I see that ye can observe these ceremonies, and that ye can offer these sacrifices, and your hearts remain unchanged, and your lives unreformed. I see that your observance of the letter, and of the ceremony, and of the outward sacrifice, makes you esteem yourselves holy and approved in my sight. But I tell you, come not to appear before me, and to tread my courts, with such mistaken views, and delusive sacrifices any longer." "Bring no more such oblations, wherein is vanity—such incense is abomination unto me: your sabbaths—the calling of your assemblies, so constituted and so spent, I cannot away with it—it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear." Such was the language in which the ancient people of God were addressed, who observed the ceremonies, but failed to bring a willing and obedient heart to the moral and more important precepts and meaning of the law; and the same may still be considered as personally addressed to all, who now observe the forms, without retaining the spirit, of religion, and use the formularies of the church, without deriving from them that moral influence, and spiritual improvement which they are so admirably calculated to convey. "Put away from you the evil of your doings from before mine eyes—cease to do evil—learn to do well," contains the substance of all religion, and is the practical effect which the worship of God—which every use of prayer, and every observance of the forms of devotion, should produce; and without it our solemn meeting is a solemn mockery, and all our religion an abomination and trouble in the sight of God!

But it is time to advert to the last head of the discourse, viz., **THE BLESSEDNESS AND HAPPINESS** which attend those, "who hear the word of God, and keep it." On this point, a few observations only will be necessary.

We shall surely be ready to say with the pious woman, to whom the words of my text were addressed, that blessed was the mother of our Lord; and that highly favoured was she among women. Now this we must certainly believe, since He, who is truth itself, has declared it, that still more "blessed are they that hear the Word of God, and keep it:" more happy they who hear Christ in their hearts by faith, than she who bare him in her womb by nature. The blessedness of a true believer—of a faithful servant of Christ, is even greater than that of the mother of the Saviour. How noble—how glorious a privilege is this! Yet the question is, are we deeply sensible of so exalted a blessedness? Blessed be the Father of mercies, that, notwithstanding our insensibility, we still enjoy it! And, though we cannot now see Christ, with the bodily eye, and here be delighted with his visible presence, yet we may,

by the eye of faith, behold him—our hearts may love him, and our souls enjoy communion and fellowship with him. Though he may not be ours by natural affinity, and consanguinity, yet he may be ours in affection, in love, and in service. And thus, spiritual regeneration—a holy and *willing* obedience to the divine law, and a prompt and cheerful submission to the divine will, bring men into a more happy relation, and a more honourable connexion with Christ, than it is possible for natural generation to do.

In hearing and meditating upon the Word of God, believers experience a pleasure and a satisfaction of which the men of the world can form no estimate, and entertain no idea whatsoever. Like David, they find it *sweet* to their taste. It is the heavenly manna, with which they feed their souls, and satisfy their spiritual appetites. It is the living *water* which they draw from the wells of salvation, with which their spirits are cheered, and their hearts refreshed. In fine, it is the food which strengthens the new man, and nourishes him to life everlasting. What pity must it excite, and what regret must it occasion, that, while this celestial manna falls daily around our camp in such purity and abundance, so few will take the trouble to gather it! that, while so few are so wise as to be filled with this heavenly food, even with marrow and with fatness, such multitudes are so reckless and inconsiderate, as to neglect and undervalue it! They “spend their *money* for that which is not bread, and their labour for that which satisfieth not.” They *lavish* their lives in search of earthly blessings, the choicest of which impoverish the hungry soul, and filleth not the empty soul with gladness. Let not any of you, my brethren, act this foolish—this soul-destroying part, lest you perish—lest you pine away, and die in your iniquities—lest you be “as an oak whose leaf fadeth, and as a garden that hath no water;” “for, saith the Lord, the mighty One of Israel, I will ease me of mine adversaries,” “and they that forsake me shall be consumed!” Our lot has been cast in a land flowing with Gospel-milk and honey—our civil and religious liberties are great and inestimable—ours is the blessed freedom of worshipping the Lord our God as every man’s conscience directs. Do not through a wilful and depraved taste, refuse to partake of the richness and sweeteness of your privileges, but with pleasure and delight feed thereon to your spiritual nourishment, and to your daily growth in grace and holiness, until you come to the full measure of the stature in Christ.

And that you may not lose the blessings attending those, “who hear the Word and keep it,” and that you may acquire the holy habit of reducing what you hear to practice, I would exhort you, and every Christian who desires to promote his eternal salvation, to *read* the sacred Scriptures frequently with care, with attention and prayer; and, at the same time, to examine, every evening, before you give sleep to your eyes, and slumber to your eye-lids, whether, throughout the past day, in all the dealings and transactions between you and your fellow-creatures, you have acted according to the divine precepts, and have transfused their spirit into all you have thought, and uttered, and done: and whether, in any case, you have fallen short of what conscience dictated as fit, and duty prescribed as essential to be observed. This personal examination, which I recommend with all the ardour which friendship can inspire, and with all the strength and vehemence which its importance demands, was followed by a heathen sage, and he thus adverts to this practice; “I make it a law,” saith he, “every day of the world to bring myself to a trial. As soon as the torches are brought me, I begin an inquiry into the transactions of

the day. I go over all that I have said and all that I have done. I conceal nothing, I pardon nothing. I speak to myself, and say, Have you not been too opinionative in this dispute? Have you not looked on this man with an evil eye? Have not you animadverted too freely upon the conduct, or the character, of this or the other person, &c.? Avoid such an animadversion for the future: it is unworthy of thee. I pardon thee now, but beware of acting in the like manner in the time to come." This self-examination was observed by a heathen; and it is an example well-becoming the imitation of a Christian!

I must now draw to a conclusion the subject which has suggested so many aspects of important and improving examination in this and the preceding exercises. But, before I dismiss altogether my meditations on this text of Scripture, I would add a parting word or two of exhortation. I have besought you, brethren, in these exercises for your good, to read, and hear, and keep the Word of God. And I would now beseech you to bear in mind that, whether my advice be followed or not, the Word of God is that by which you shall finally be judged—that by which a sentence of approbation, or of disapprobation upon your thoughts and actions, shall finally be pronounced. Now if this be so—if the Book of God must be the judge that shall acquit, or condemn hereafter, it surely must be your true wisdom to read and study it *now*, in order that, by it, your spirits may be tried, and state ascertained. It is one of the surest characters of a good Christian, that he makes the divine Word as his rule and counsellor, on every day, and in every emergency of life, in order that he may ascertain the divine will, and having found it, to keep it. It is his way, in which he delights to walk. It is his wisdom by which he directs his ways. It is his instrument by which he works—his *charter* by which he holds his *immunities and privileges*. In a word, it is the *will* and *testament* of Christ, in which are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: and it is the *law* of his kingdom, which it concerns all his subjects to know and to study. Be, therefore, careful, my brethren, to make God's Word your rule, your way, your wisdom, and your delight, labouring to increase more and more in the knowledge and the practice of it. Be not like those invited to the marriage feast, who chose to attend on their cattle, their ground, and their wives, rather than on the Master of the entertainment—Christ. Beware of acting like the Gadarenes, who, for the loss of their swine, became weary of his company, and desired him to depart out of their coasts. Rather imitate the conduct of Mary, who, although there was much work to do in the house, neglected it, that she might sit at the feet of Jesus, and hear his doctrine; and for which he greatly commended her. Christ was better pleased to see her hungering after the feast which he brought her, than solicitous and anxious to provide a feast for him. He was more delighted with her love to his doctrine, than with her sister's care for his entertainment. Let the same mind be in you which was in her. Go and do likewise. Sit with humility and attention at the feet of Jesus. Listen to the gracious words which came from the mouth of him, who "spake as never man spake." In fine, seek to "learn of him who is meek and lowly in heart, and you shall find rest unto your souls."

May God bless what has been spoken! May the eyes of your understandings be opened to see the wonders of his law, and may you so read and hear, as that you may evermore keep them, and bring forth good fruits, to the glory of God, and the salvation of your precious and immortal souls. Amen.

## THE LAW OF CHRISTIAN CHARITY.

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"They cannot recompense thee: but thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just."—LUKE, xiv. 14.

THERE are few obligations more generally allowed, and what is of far greater importance, there are few more generally practised, than those which have for their object the relief of the suffering part of the community. Amidst a too prevalent corruption of manners—amidst a luxury which exceeds all bounds—amidst the decay or extinction of many sterner virtues, charity is still left to allure and to lead onward in the road to heaven. Almost every argument and every principle which can be adduced in the recommendation of duty, concur in enforcing the practice of charity. If we retire into our own breasts, and examine the feelings that exist there, we find our compassion so powerfully excited by cases of distress and misfortune, so cordial a co-operation in affording assistance to the distressed, that we cannot for a moment doubt, either concerning the reality of the feeling, or concerning the end for which that feeling was implanted in our breast.

If from our own breast we carry abroad our observations into the actual state of human society, we are soon led to acknowledge, that those things which all desire, but which all cannot obtain, that these must be regulated by some fixed rule of distribution, by some stern, unbending law. Peace and order could not otherwise be maintained among men. Did not, therefore, charity step in to supply the imperfection, to soften the rigour of these laws, instances would continually occur of hardships extremely hopeless; of virtuous and useful members of society sinking under the pressure of calamities; calamities which they could in no degree have averted, and from which they had no power to escape.

And then the feelings of our nature, as well as the deductions of our reason, are abundantly confirmed and strengthened by the Word of revelation. Almost every page of Scripture declares, "Whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" All claim, then, you see, to a religious character, all pretensions to piety and zeal, without this test, are nothing worth. Benevolence and humanity are the characteristics of our religion; the end and aim of Christianity. And by this, and by this only, do we shew that we are Christ's disciples, if we love one another.

But it is unnecessary for me to stop and point out more at large to this

\* On behalf of the Royal Dispensary for Diseases of the Ear, and for the Deaf and Dumb.

audience, how frequently and how powerfully the Scriptures excite us all to the practice of charity. I know not, therefore, how I can more effectually promote the important purpose for which we are now assembled together, than by previously defining the boundaries of charity, and then by simply laying before you those strong and peculiar calls which the present Institution for relieving the privations of the deaf, holds out to your continued, and I should hope to your increased, patronage and support.

There is scarcely a virtue which man is enjoined to practise, which does not require some caution and correction. By the neglect of these, virtue itself becomes liable to perversion and abuse. And this, which is true of almost all the virtues, will apply with peculiar propriety to that duty which we are now considering—even charity, the exercise of which requires foresight, in order that it may fully answer the end it has in view, that it may produce the greatest possible sum of human happiness and virtue.

Now this virtue hath, as we think, exceeded its limits, when it is recommended to our notice without any restraints of prudence; when it is sought to embrace within its grasp the whole human race, neglecting, or at least less regarding, the nearer ties of friends and home. Universal and undistinguished philanthropy, was the favourite theory of a neighbouring nation, at the very period when its scaffold was streaming with the blood of an amiable and benevolent monarch, and when an infuriated people were spreading united misery and war. Such doctrines, however, receive no countenance from the religion of Jesus Christ. We are commanded, indeed, to “do good unto all,” but “principally unto them which are of the household of faith.” Every precept which relates to the doctrine of charity is of an active, practical nature, founded on a thorough knowledge of the wants and constitution of man. We are enjoined to direct our efforts and assistance principally, in the first instance, unto them upon whom such kindness would be most natural—upon relations, friends, and country. The well-being and happiness of society would necessarily be diminished, if benevolence, overlooking the nearer objects, should extend its view to the more distant ones; if, for instance, a father regarding the whole world as his family, should neglect that part of it which is more peculiarly connected and dependent upon himself—if, in looking upon himself as a citizen, and considering different states as one great community, he should forget the more urgent claims of his own country.

In perfect unison with the doctrine we have laid down were the precepts and example of our blessed Lord and Master: his religion was offered to the Jew first, and then unto the Gentile. He lamented with the greatest affection over the city of Jerusalem; and when he viewed the body of Lazarus Jesus wept. Even in his last agony the Saviour shewed himself alive to the feeling of a kinsman, testifying the kindness with which a parent should be honoured, and at the same time proving his regard for a beloved disciple.

And here let it not be supposed, that we are thus limiting and diminishing the influence of that primary virtue, charity, the extent of which is one of the peculiar and distinguishing attributes of the Christian religion. We wish rather to ground this duty upon its true basis, and to point out its proper line of limitation, in order that benevolence may be rendered more extensively beneficial. To attain this we should, in the first place, consider our nearer ties, and afterwards extend our view to the whole world.

Like the circle which a pebble produces on a lake, which emanating from one common centre, by degrees expands itself further and wider; so also Christian charity at first embraces kindred, home, and country, till the last circle is bounded by no other horizon than that of the world itself. With this, the true spirit of Christian charity, are we now assembled together to consider and relieve the necessity of those our less fortunate brethren, who, by the inscrutable will of the Almighty, are deprived of the important faculties of hearing and of speech. Among the many misfortunes to which human nature (for the wisest reasons, no doubt) is subjected, the want or weakness of the faculty of hearing is doubtless one of the most afflicting. Children who are born deaf, or who have become so, are unable, in such a state, to obtain, by the faculties that remain, any considerable comfort. They are, in a manner, dead to themselves and their friends; they take no interest in the busy scenes which are passing around them: though belonging to the community, they are separated from it. They are surrounded by objects busy and delightful: they are placed in a separate and insulated station; in a condition of indigence and dependence, strangers to all the privileges and enjoyments of their fellow-men. Let us, however, as now called upon so to do, take a nearer and a more distinct view of the melancholy state of these, the children of misfortune.

One of the greatest privations of our nature, is the incapacity to communicate what is passing in our mind. The social qualities of man are the principal characteristics of his nature. He is the only being on the face of the earth who is capable of enjoying, to any great extent, a communication of sentiment with the rest of his fellows. Never can we be sufficiently thankful for this distinguished blessing: for the happiness and the comfort of existence depends greatly upon it: even the pleasures of life would be stripped of half their charms if there were no friends to partake of them. How cheerless and how useless would be the light of knowledge itself, if its rays were incommunicable. We are indebted not only to the proper use, but even to the capacity of knowledge, for that facility of intercourse which directs the faculties. And if the social faculty be of such importance to the pleasures of life, what must it be to the calamities to which human nature is subject. How dark, how mournful, would be the season of calamity, if there were none to whom we could unfold our sorrows. The consoling accents of friendship shed a balm over every wound, whilst the exercise of compassion and love is no less grateful to those who are afflicted. Without the organs of speech and hearing affliction must be undiscovered, and the load of evil irremovable, because unknown. We, indeed, by the blessing of heaven, do enjoy the social advantages to their full extent; but surely, this ought to be the very reason why we should pity those to whom they are denied. If your own selves are happily exempt from this calamity, if your own intercourse in life has not presented to your view a fellow-creature whose ears have never been unstopped, yet the calamity is frequently met with; and as we feel as men and as brethren, we are surely called upon to take a lively and practical interest in the restoration or relief of those, whom Providence has thus visited.

In the next place, the deaf, unless they have the advantage of peculiar discipline, can contribute but little, if any thing, to their own subsistence, or to the welfare of mankind. They may indeed be taught, by certain means, to labour in the lowest, but seldom, however, can they be elevated to any one of those

higher employments, which are the pride and the wealth of a civilized community. The treasures of intellectual research are utterly beyond their reach. To discipline their understandings, even with the most obvious truths, is attended with greater difficulty and trouble than most of their friends are willing to bestow. Even if their lot be cast in a superior station, in the midst of affluence and ease, their vacant melancholy look throws a shade over all the splendour which may surround them. What then shall we think of such objects, placed in the lap of misfortune, relying for support on those who find it hard to support themselves, with no friend who has leisure to observe their wants; deprived of the exterior conveniences of life, and exposed to the unfeeling jest of the pitiless and the profligate! If we can only afford comfort to the sick, a refuge to the houseless, or a pecuniary assistance to the child of want, our exertions are only the performance of duties which religion and reason demand from us. But when there is superadded to these calamities, the reasonable expectation of more substantial benefits, the prospect of supplying sufficient means and powers of exertion, of restoring the faculty of hearing, who can be indifferent to such a cause, who would not endeavour to console the objects of such severe deprivations?

But the greatest of the calamities which are the lot of those who have not this faculty, still remains to be considered. The deaf, in their natural and unassisted state, are greatly, if not entirely, deprived of the greatest of all blessings—the blessing of religion. Surely, then, we must acknowledge that every other provision is lost in comparison with this. And here, let not your good feelings be checked by the common and chilling observation, that such persons are not responsible for the want of that talent which is denied them. The same objection might be advanced against religious instruction in every instance, and at every time. The poor, we allow, will be answerable for no more than they have received: but are we not to strive to enlighten them? Are we not to open and prepare their minds for the reception of the Gospel, and to diffuse the light of heavenly truth wherever we can? This is a design worthy of the Christian; and it is the very end which this charity is now labouring to accomplish. The more difficult the undertaking, the greater is the support needed. And success has crowned their exertions. It must delight every well-disposed mind, that where it could least be expected, that there Christianity has found its way; for the rays of divine knowledge have penetrated to the hopeless chambers of the deaf, and the “people that walked in darkness have seen great light.” Even where the inlets to instruction appeared to be indissolubly barred, there have been opened the glorious prospects of eternity. The unhappy sufferers are enabled to attest that the God who made them to differ from their fellow-creatures, is a God of mercy; for he has visited them with his favour, he has opened to them the riches of his grace. No longer strangers to his heavenly promises, they now see their strength and their stay. By such consolations all bodily infirmities are soothed and mitigated. They know also that they shall rise hereafter with bodies perfect and glorious; that they shall then declare the wonderful goodness of the Almighty, through all the boundless ages of eternity. Can wealth, then, be possibly better employed, than in raising our fellow-creatures from a state of darkness that Christ may give them light?

It is not, however, easy to conceive the misery of a situation which we never

knew, nor, I hope, are likely to experience ourselves. But unless we thus abstract our thoughts, and fancy ourselves in the condition of those unhappy beings for whom we now plead, it is impossible that you can form an adequate conception of the privations which they undergo. Forget, then, for a moment how gracious the goodness of God has been to you. Divest yourselves of that cheerfulness of temper, with that interest in the world which you have now the blessedness to enjoy. Disengage yourselves from that friendly intercourse which is the enhancement of your pleasures, and solaces all your sorrows. Instead of that active, happy employment, by which you provide for the subsistence of yourselves and others, let all comforts vanish from your minds. Exchange also the illumination of reason for a universal blank. Forsake that blessed confidence in the Divine Providence which is now filling your breast with satisfaction. Give up your trust and your hope in Jesus Christ; hope that has led your footsteps into paths of peace, and smoothed your bed of sickness and pain. Renounce all this, and what then would be your state? What, but the very situation for which we are now soliciting your co-operation and aid! If, while labouring under such a malady, corporeal and mental, you could be made sensible of cure, what would you not sacrifice for its attainment? How could you express your obligations of gratitude to Him who could bring you out of this valley of the shadow of death?

If this would be your feeling, recollect, that Jesus Christ has delivered this as the main command, the proof of obedience, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Thanks to Almighty God, the hearts of the benevolent have been opened; those we well know who are in the very highest stations of life, have thought it no degradation to their rank to attest their warmest feelings for those afflicted with deafness. Some years since it would not have been believed that a child who was born deaf, and consequently dumb, should be taught to speak, to read, to write. Such, however, as we know, and have ourselves seen in the school, are the happy effects of this Christian institution. Through its labours and assistance, the charm of social life has re-appeared; the powers of industry have been called into action; the treasures of knowledge have been communicated to the unfortunate; and the Sun of Righteousness has arisen with healing in his wings.

From the arguments, then, already adduced, we are justified in believing, that few, if any, charities can advance a stronger claim to your support than the present, for which I am to-day the willing advocate. Though I would decry no charity whatever, yet we may with fairness observe, that the condition of the blind, so much and so deservedly the objects of your pity, is more tolerable than that of the deaf; for the darkness of the body can never be compared to the darkness of the mind. The alleviations of blindness are more within the reach of all; are equally attainable by the poor and the rich. The blind can receive comfort in the attention of friends and the conduct of neighbours. But when the faculty of speaking and hearing are unknown, no relief can be administered without trouble, and patience, and skill; efforts, attended with an expense which the poor are totally unable to attain.

This malady, then, could never be greatly relieved but by the support of a public fund, and the state of this fund is altogether unequal to the numerous applications for relief. Many are the sons and daughters of affliction whom the directors are reluctantly compelled to exclude from the paie oi this

charity. But notwithstanding this defalcation, they have been zealous and active in the cause of humanity, and trusting to the co-operation of an enlightened and a liberal public, they have even anticipated and increased their means of accommodation, by opening a new building, and making considerable augmentations to the half-yearly number.

But something remains to be done by you. I commend, then, the cause to the feelings and the liberality of this audience. If such meritorious, such unparalleled exertions, be not followed by your support, or if your encouragement be not given, it will bring a stain, and the first of the sort which was ever attached to the British name and spirit. To succour the infirm, to relieve the distressed, are the primary and indispensable duties of the Christian; without this all our other virtues are as nothing. Shall we neglect to be charitable? Then the Saviour of the world has left us in vain an example to charity, without which whosoever liveth is counted dead before God.

In the culture and exercise of this duty both judgment and caution are required: otherwise, while we imagine we are relieving the indigent, and wiping away the tear of the destitute, we may be upholding imposture and encouraging idleness. Not that I would throw discouragement on the feelings, or stop one avenue of the human heart; it is better to be often deceived than want the disposition of benevolence. But still the duty, as well as the pleasure of alms-giving, must be enhanced by the certainty that it is properly and worthily bestowed. Such is the opportunity now before us, for the object of your brotherly love, for all that it can bestow. Many, I know, are the appeals which are made to the bounty of the well-disposed: the number, however, of them, thanks be to God, have not been to you a subject of complaint, but of gladness; and our manifold and laudable institutions are among the greatest blessings which this country enjoys. Favoured as we are pre-eminently by heaven, it is incumbent on us to be proportionably distinguished by deeds of gratitude. If no other country surpass our own in fame, in wealth, in liberty, let it be our care and ambition to exceed them in the celestial virtue of Christian charity. By evincing on all occasions the desire of removing the distress and promoting the comfort of the lower orders, we render not only comfort to them and confer one of the most important blessings, but we secure the stability of the church; we give birth to sentiments of gratitude and affection; and by the same means we attain that which is the end of our being—the blessing and reward of the Most High.

If these institutions, then, have such a claim on your support, you will not, I am sure, now deny your assistance to those who suffer under one of the greatest of all misfortunes, the being deprived of the faculty of hearing. Is their affliction trivial? Is their calamity light? Is it no heavy trouble? Alas, it is one of the greatest bereavements, as we have fully shown, to which mortality is liable, and such as without the advantage of public funds can never be adequately relieved. Human nature itself, unenlightened by the Gospel, and ignorant of the will of God, would sympathize with such an one, unable to withstand the motives to compassion. How shall we, then, with the law of God written on our hearts, with the heavenly pattern of the Saviour before us, whose life was a life of mercy, and whose kingdom is open only to the merciful and the liberal—how shall we escape if such objects as these apply in vain? It would be an aggravation even to *their* misery, if the breasts of a Christian

audience were shut against them. Such has never been, and we trust never will be the case.

On such an occasion, and with this audience, I need not, I am sure, say more. The objects before you have, I trust, commended themselves to your best feelings; and the effects, I trust, will appear in your enlarged benevolence. Many have been the occasions, for more than twenty years, which has called us forth in the support of the charitable institutions of this metropolis; and gladly have we obeyed the call. We should not, however, be faithful to the cause of truth, or to the feelings of gratitude, if we did not add, that in every instance the benevolence of the hearers has more than repaid the anxiety of the society, and the hope of the preacher.

Let me, then, now dismiss you to the pleasing discharge of the sacred duty, in the last place, by reminding them whose hearts and hands are open with a warmth of feeling to the necessities of these otherwise wretched beings, that a day will come when those who are now deaf will hear your praises, and when the tongue of those who were dumb will plead for you before the throne of God. *The Royal Dispensary for Diseases of the Ear, and for the Deaf and Dumb*, the only institution in the metropolis having these objects in view, was founded in the year 1816: and it appears that upwards of nine thousand persons afflicted with deafness and other diseases of the ear have been cured. It has thus been the means of very extensive good to the poor. In consequence of its extensive sphere of true Christian benevolence, but feeling the inadequacy of the present dispensary-house, it is the wish and intention of the governors, either to enlarge the present, or to erect a more commodious building, for the reception of a greater number of the children of calamity. This institution, like every other charity, had at first, and still has, many difficulties to contend against, and many discouragements to bear up against. Still it has never relaxed in its efforts, trusting to the liberality of the British public, and finding their reward in the testimony of an approving conscience. It will be also gratifying to a Christian audience to hear, that no inconsiderable number of those who were under the pressure of poverty, and have applied to this Dispensary and obtained relief, have since become enabled, from their altered situations and circumstances in life, themselves to come forward to support that institution, to which they were in their days of misery so deeply indebted. Though it may be truly said, that nature—that is, that the Almighty, the most benevolent of beings—rarely is wanting in the perfection of all his works, and that it is in very insulated cases that any striking difference in the organs of hearing exist, it is a fact remarkably indicative of the almost total neglect with which this disease has been treated, that in England alone there are upwards of one hundred and thirty-seven thousand persons who are deaf. Surely, then, this is the strongest additional proof of the necessity of such an institution as this; as also the great misery it may in future prevent. If proof were wanting of the good effect of the Dispensary, it may now be seen. Children may now be seen in the vestry of this church, who were born deaf and dumb, who will answer any question which you may put to them.

Surely, then, nothing now remains, but that the patrons of the institution entrust their cause to your feelings and your liberality. I need say no more. “Give, and it shall be given to you, pressed down, and shaking down, and running over, shall men give into your bosom.”

THE DEPENDENCE OF THE MINISTER'S REWARD ON THE SPIRITUAL  
PROGRESS OF HIS HEARERS.

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REV. H. MELVILL, A.M.  
CAMDEN CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, JULY 19, 1835.

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"Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward."—*2 JOHN, 8.*

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IT has often been said, and we quite assent to the truth of the saying, that the Christian Church must stand or fall with the doctrine of justification by faith: and nothing is more unfair than the reproach which has been frequently thrown upon the upholders of this doctrine, that in their zeal to magnify the power of faith, they deprecate the necessity of works. In maintaining with St. Paul, that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law, we are only anxious to maintain that salvation must be reached in point of fact, only through the merits of Christ, and not through deservings of our own. It is not that we ascribe any justifying energy to faith in itself, as though faith were to save us; we would just as soon ascribe justifying energy to works, as though works were to save us. We regard Christ Jesus as exclusively and undividedly the Saviour: and when we speak of ourselves as saved by faith, we mean only, that faith associates us with the Saviour, and is, in fact, the condition on which we participate the results of his mediation. Faith may be the appointed link which binds us to the Redeemer, the ordained channel through which the blessings procured by his death flow down into our souls: and therefore may we describe ourselves as justified by faith, though all the while it is to Christ alone we ascribe our justification.

And when this is borne in mind, it is easy to see, that we may as truly say with St. James, that we are justified by works, as with St. Paul, that we are justified by faith. We often hear disquisitions on the apparent contradiction between the apostles, as though in the one case works, and in the other faith, were put forth as the procuring cause of salvation. If this were a true account of the controversy, there would indeed be a difficulty, not so much in reconciling the apostles with each other, as in shewing that either maintain doctrines consistent with the general tenor of Scripture. But these objections vanish when you have settled as a preliminary, that both apostles refer the procuring cause of salvation exclusively to Christ. St. Paul and St. James are to be considered as equally decisive on the truth, that, so far as what deserves or obtains it is concerned, salvation must be ascribed undividedly to the Redeemer. The one, therefore, cannot be arguing that faith is meritorious, and the other cannot be arguing that works are meritorious: they are simply speaking of the condition on which the merits of Christ become applied to the individual; and the only question is, whether they give different conditions, or the same in different language. The answer to this question is easily given; for since what St.

Paul means by *faith* cannot exist without producing what St. James means by *works*, and what St. James means by *works* cannot be wrought unless produced by what St. Paul means by *faith*, it is evident enough, that the two apostles assign virtually the same condition to justification, though the one states it in the form of a principle, and the other in fruits which that principle invariably generates.

And you will also perceive, if we are correct in these remarks, that faith and works must be of equal importance ; and the one should be as much insisted on as the other, if we would deliver and maintain a form of sound doctrine. There is just as much danger in pointing men to faith, as in pointing them to works, as intimately connected with their justification before God. The danger is, in either case, that of their ascribing to the condition of salvation that energy, or that merit which resides in none but the Saviour. And we have our fears, that many who are most vehement in contending for justification by faith, and most earnest in denouncing justification by works, overlook the important truth, that faith and works are precisely on a par. They battle as though faith were the justifier, and the introduced works were the usurper, in that mighty office ; whereas the simple fact is, that works justify, exactly in the same sense and the same degree as faith, each being a necessary condition to salvation, and neither of them the procuring cause of salvation.

We may also speak of the reward of good works, and represent them as obtaining a recompence from God. We feel it, indeed, important, that whatever is advanced on such a topic should be carefully weighed and digested. It is so easy to fall into mistake, and to gather an erroneous impression from statements not sufficiently explicit, that the reward of good works should never be asserted but with the greatest caution, and in well-considered language. Yet there can be no doubt, that the reward of good works is as much a Scriptural doctrine as any other : it is as broadly announced and as urgently taught. The representations which the Bible furnishes of the last judgment, set before us the eternal state of men as determined by their works ; so that not only are works to decide generally whether happiness or misery shall be their portion, they give also a standard by which may be found the degree of the one or of the other. We read of "a prophet's reward," and of "a righteous man's reward;" of this individual having rule over ten cities, and of that over five. So that we have every reason for believing, that the nicest possible proportion will be kept up at last between the actions and the mental operations of man ; that to every degree of holiness there will be a corresponding degree of happiness ; and to every degree of wickedness a corresponding one of misery. And, indeed, we know not how any other arrangement could be exactly adapted to our nature and our circumstances : for placed as we are in a state of probation, and acted on by the fears and the hopes of another state of being, it would be hard to say how the dispensation could accord with our condition, unless there were an instituted and indissoluble connexion between what is done here, and what is received hereafter. You take away its fitness for creatures constituted and circumstanced as we are ourselves—you deny, in short, the peculiar economy beneath which we live—if you deny that as to every sin there will be meted out a proportionate punishment, and as to every good work there will be meted out a proportionate reward.

But now the difficulty is, to avoid confounding the notion of reward with the

notion of merit. Undoubtedly when we speak of reward between man and man, we suppose that the man has in some way deserved what he receives from the other. We should never call what is bestowed a reward, if he who bestows it bestows it only out of generosity, without any, the least claim on the part of the receiver. It is the manifest danger of attaching some notion of reward between God and man, and the manifest injustice of imagining that man can deserve any thing from God, from which springs that jealousy of the doctrine of a recompense for good works, which has been comparatively banished from our creed. Yet the jealousy is unfounded: it may be in thorough consistency with the confessed truth, that no creature can merit from the Creator. We cannot do good works but through the grace of God: they are, in fact, the results of God's working in us. It is not possible, therefore, that they should be strictly meritorious: but God, out of his infinite condescension, and in order to encourage us to a diligent use of the strength he imparts, may determine that such and such allotments shall be assigned to such and such attainments. This being the case, the allotments may be justly described as the reward of the attainments, seeing that they are contingent upon them, and increased with them, and diminished with them, just as retribution between man and man. But if all the while it be God that worketh in us both to will and to do, the attainments cannot in themselves be deserving of recompense by us, they having in short been wrought by divine agency, and therefore cannot have claim on divine justice. It was a saying of old Wycliff, that "what God rewards is his own work in us;" and this simple admonition, whilst it excludes the claims which the most righteous would advance, leaves in full force all those assertions of recompense which stimulate to diligence, and yet make labour seem light.

Now we have gone into these remarks on the reward of human actions, because the matter on which we would discourse places this doctrine in a very prominent light. The evangelist speaks of recompense as that which may be gained, and then lost; and thus represents every fraction of conduct as exerting a direct influence on our everlasting portion. He evidently supposes that we shall be dealt with according to the laws of a most accurate retribution; just as though we had the power of deserving, and were to regain in the way of payment the gladness of the future.

We have thought it best thus to state at the outset, what appears the Scriptural doctrine of the reward of good works, and its thorough accordance with all that is told us of the perfect gratuitousness of salvation, and in order that our minds may not be perplexed by the assertion of St. John, or by those to which it may give rise, as though there were forgetfulness of the fundamental principle, that "we are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves," and that "eternal life is God's free gift through Christ."

Now having thus guarded you against misapprehension, we proceed to consider the Apostle's exhortation, remarkable as it is on many accounts, and especially as addressed from a minister to his people. We are not distinctly informed to whom this epistle of St. John was addressed, whether to a church or to an individual; but it is at least evident that the party was one with whom the Apostle had what we may call a ministerial connexion, whom he had been instrumental in converting or confirming in the faith: and this settles, with sufficient accuracy for all practical purposes, the relative circumstances of the

speaker and those to whom he speaks; making the exhortation that of a pastor to his flock, and therefore sanctioning its transfer to our own day, and our own pulpit. It is when thus considered, and thus applied, that the words of our text, as we have before said, appear most remarkable: for the minister is not exhorting his people to take heed to their *own* reward, but only to *his*: as though they had the power of increasing or diminishing, not only what might be awarded hereafter to themselves, but what might be awarded hereafter to their spiritual teacher: "Look to yourselves"—not "that *ye* lose not the things which *ye* have wrought," and not "that *ye* receive a full reward;" but, "Look to yourselves that *we* lose not those things which *we* have wrought, but that *we* receive a full reward." The minister is thus represented as in some way dependent on his people for his degree of future happiness; so that they may heighten or lower that degree, just as it is universally admitted they may their own. They are to look to their own, in order to provide that their minister's labour may not be in vain, that he may not lose the things which he has wrought, and that their faults and deficiencies may not cause a diminution in his everlasting portion, but that he may "receive a full reward."

We own at once, that there is something in this statement which it is hard to understand, something which it is hard to reconcile. Ordinarily we are accustomed to think, (and there is every appearance of fairness in the thought) that if a man have done faithfully his duty, he shall enter on a happiness commensurate with his faithfulness; and that the conduct of others with whom he has been associated will have no material influence on his reward, than as it can be traced to his own want of energy. Once allow that a man has not failed in the performance of duty, but that he has discharged it to the full measure of his ability, and you seem to exonerate him from all blame, however the objects of his solicitude remain without benefit from his labours. There would be much that is disheartening in any contrary opinion: for the moment you make the minister's recompense contingent on the success, and not on the fidelity of his exertions, you turn him adrift on a wide sea of uncertainty, with scarcely a resting-place on which hope can settle. The most comforting thing, we believe, to those who are labouring in the ministry, is, that through God's grace they may free themselves from the blood of their hearers: and if they do but preach earnestly and affectionately the Gospel, "rightly dividing the word of truth," and being instant in season and out of season, then, indeed, though they may not prevail to the winning over the obdurate to the faith of the Redeemer, they will at least have provided that none of those to whom they have dispensed holy things shall rise up against them at the judgment; none charge home as a fault upon their pastor, that they died in ignorance or unbelief, and therefore come up from the grave unprepared for a trial which they cannot avoid.

We cannot, (for example) indeed, presume to say, if we take our own ease in illustration, that we have discharged towards you the solemn office of the priesthood with that earnestness, that fidelity, that zeal, that affection, and that disinterestedness, which the vows that are upon us have pledged us to exhibit. We cannot dare to hope that there are none amongst you, if we were now face to face on our trial, who could bring any just accusation against their minister, or trace to a defect in his ministration the hardness of heart, the indifference, and the ignorance, which have never yet yielded to the moral

assault : and in the exact proportion that the little progress of religion may be justly ascribed to imperfection, and be not unavoidable on the labours of the individual whom God hath set over it, must that individual expect a diminution in his after recompence ; so that every sin which he has left unreproved, and every conscience which he has not attacked, and every self-delusion which he has not exposed, will tell injuriously on his portion for eternity, and strike off fractions, if it destroy not the whole, of the treasure which he looks for in the land beyond the grave.

But is the principle to be carried yet further than this. If we were morally certain that there had been no deficiency in our earthly ministrations, and that none of those to whom we are accustomed to preach, could throw on us, in the least degree, the blame of their worldly-mindedness or their ignorance, should we still be required to hold ourselves dependent on you for the portion to be awarded to us at the judgment—still compelled to invest you, as it were, with the power of throwing us down from the station which we thought to have reached, and diminish by your unbelief and your wickedness, the measure of joys which is to constitute our inheritance. Indeed, there is an appearance of injustice in this ; and yet this it is which seems implied in the words of our text. And we are free to own, that we doubt whether there can be any where found, a more touching spectacle, one on which the minister of Christ can gaze with greater intenseness of emotion, than that which arises naturally before us on perusing the passage under review. We look on the evangelist—who had been privileged to recline on the Saviour's breast, and who seems to have drawn from his resting-place much of that seraphic spirit which glowed within him—far advanced in years, and evidently approaching the confines of life and expecting the hour of his dismissal : and as we contemplate the old man gathering up his little strength, that he may yet inculcate another lesson, and deliver another maxim, we recall all his labours, in the cause of his Master, and all his sufferings ; and we think with ourselves, how glorious will be his transition from the world of toil to the world of rest ; and we dwell with delight on the magnificence, as well as the certainty, of the recompence laid up for the aged Apostle. Should we imagine that there were contingencies even in regard to his final blessedness ? And just ready as he seems to go hence, fully ripe for all that is noble in immortality, it would never suggest itself to our minds, that there was even then a possible risk of his losing, in some degree, his happiness and splendour, and that, too, a risk through the conduct of others rather than his own. For when we listen to the Apostle, to whom we have looked with so intense an interest, and so ardent an admiration, O *then* it is the spectacle becomes so touching and overpowering : for St. John is not exclaiming with St. Paul, in a fine outbreak of triumph, “ I have fought a good fight ; I have finished my course ; I have kept the faith : henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness : ” he is rather turning in the attitude of entreaty, to those for whom he has laboured, and for whom he has watched ; and although he may be regarded as almost entering eternity, he does not dwell in rapture in the assurance of the reward he was about to receive ; he looks back from the summit he has reached, and, as though he perceived that it yet depended upon others, whether the sparkling things and beautiful which he saw in the yonder vista, should be worked into his portion, he entreats his children in the faith, not to snatch from him the glory and the blessedness which were

just bursting on his gaze ; aye, he *beseeches* them, and that too with the exquisite persuasiveness of a man who knows that he deserves a kindness at their hands, “ Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.”

Now it must be obvious to you all, that if words such as these might be addressed by St. John to his converts, there can be no minister, however exemplary in the discharge of his duties, on whose lips they may not with propriety be found when speaking to his people. There cannot be one who, if he were even on his death-bed, and apparently on the point of taking possession of the promised inheritance, would not have cause to look on those unto whom he had ministered, and to consider, that upon them depended the degree of blessedness into which he should enter. And it is in every sense important, that we ascertain, if possible, the reasons of the connexion which thus seems asserted, between the conduct of the people, and the reward of their pastor, so that there may be a right understanding on both sides of that intimate membership in which the two must be linked. It is to this that we address ourself. We feel that while our text is in the Bible, it cannot be denied that your minister's future portion is in some way dependent upon you, as well as upon himself; upon your reception, as well as upon his delivery, of the truth : and it is of consequence to both parties that this dependence on the other, be investigated and accurately defined, so that the one may be excited to a greater earnestness of teaching, and the other in receiving the great doctrines of the Gospel.

We observe, in the first place, that St. John seems to speak only of them who had hearkened to his preaching, and who had been persuaded to come out of a world that lieth in wickedness. Undoubtedly if it be supposable he had failed to warn any sinner with sufficient fidelity and sufficient affection, and that thus sinners had in consequence gone on in their transgression, the Apostle would have been chargeable with blood-guiltiness : and he must have brought into the account his imperfect discharge of the ministerial office, when dwelling on causes which might affect his final happiness. But if he had been faithful in his ministry, his reward, we might believe, would be the same, whatever his success. The wicked might proceed in their wickedness, but the watchman had warned them, and therefore was he free from every penalty which they had incurred, and blessed with every reward proposed to the performance of duty. And, indeed, it is not possible that our text should refer to cases in which the preacher has himself been to blame; for he could not call on his *hearers* to look to *themselves*, when it was on *his own* part that the fault lay. Neither can any be included in the exhortation who have not made profession of religion, inasmuch as there must have been some moral progress ere there could be fear of the Apostle's losing the things he had wrought. Now this somewhat narrows our field of inquiry, and gathers within a moderate compass the difficulties to be explained, and the truths to be established. The simple question now is, how that part of a clergyman's flock which is truly religious, and which has been spiritually advantaged by his ministrations, may so conduct itself as to take off from that fulness of reward which he might otherwise have received. There are two ways in which, through the remainder of our discourse, we would endeavour to furnish an answer to this question : the first, in considering the direct interest which the minister necessarily has in the

spiritual progress of those over whom he is set ; the second, by observing the share which he ought to have in their prayers and their supplications : and when we have worked out the materiel necessary to the matter in hand, which is to be found under each division, you will, we think, acknowledge, that it was with good reason that St. John called on his *converts* to look to themselves lest *he* should fail to obtain a full reward at last.

WE ARE TO CONSIDER, THEN, IN THE FIRST PLACE, HOW INTIMATELY THE PREACHER IS ASSOCIATED WITH HIS PEOPLE, AND THE DIRECT INTEREST WHICH HE NECESSARILY HAS IN THEIR SPIRITUAL PROGRESS.

Now it is true we have always a difficulty in speaking of future happiness, just because we must employ terms which have been constructed for an imperfect condition ; and that very description is made to those narrowed and weakened capacities which we shall have exchanged for nobler ere that knowledge shall be attained. Thus, for example, it is hard, and almost impossible, for us to suppose our felicity complete, without the presence of those whom we have loved upon earth ; so that we naturally transfer our domestic associations to heaven, and make much of its blessedness consist in the renewal of intimacies which have been broken up by death. We have never felt any doubt on that point, that we who have known each other on earth, will know each other again in a future state : for we have never seen how the opposite condition could consist with that preservation of identity, by which the individual who is raised shall be the very individual who died and was buried. But along with this condition we have always argued, there must be great error in supposing future happiness dependent on our being re-associated with those with whom we have lived on earth : as though it were to constitute the felicity of the father, that he again meets his dead child ; and the widow that she is re-united to her husband. There needs nothing to expose the fallacy of such a supposition, but to shew, that if it were correct, you take away the elements of happiness from those who may not find their relations in the same world with themselves, and consign to disappointment, if not to misery, the father whose children are not with him in heaven, and the widow who cannot discover in the shining assembly the one who on earth had been the centre of her affection. And though it be mysterious, yea, altogether inscrutable, how we can ourselves be happy, and yet know that those whom we best loved are unalterably and unchangeably wretched, it seems impossible to doubt, that this will be the case in a great variety of instances. There must be many families, between whose members, an eternal separation will be made at the judgment : but there is no question that those who are received into heaven will be for evermore blessed, notwithstanding the known misery of those who are excluded. We may not, therefore, be able to explain, but we seem necessitated to believe, the independence of future happiness on the renewal of present associations—an independence which, at all events, must amount to this, that when the associations are not renewed, God supplies every deficiency, as the husband of the widow, and the father of the fatherless.

Now when we have guarded you against an opinion which would make the happiness of heaven an uncertainty, we may proceed to state without fear, that the re-union of those with whom we have taken sweet counsel together on earth, may be regarded as a right source of future enjoyment. The fault lies

in calculating on the renewal of *family* connexions, simply as family connexions ; just as though heaven, like earth, were to be divided into households, in place of presenting a *universal brotherhood*. There would be no danger of our crowding the future with a mere carnal imagery, and of carrying across the grave, whenever we strive to anticipate what lies beyond the selfish and contracted feelings of the family group. We suppose it altogether allowable to reckon on the continuance of friendships of which religion is the basis, and to expect much of after happiness from their being ripened and strengthened. We take, for example, the instance of a parent and his children. There is a natural gushing of the heart, which is not to be confounded with a religious emotion, except so far as there is a sacredness around all those sweet sympathies which God has made to circulate between members of the same household. The father may love his child, without the least reference to that child being a child of God : just as an inferior animal has a yearning over its offspring, yielding to sensibilities which nature has implanted. And the father does wrong, if after he buries his child he solaces himself with the thought of folding him in his embrace, just as he would if they were parted for a while by a continent or an ocean ; for this is manifestly a mere turning of heaven into earth, and making no allowance for an incalculable change, whether in capacities or in scene. But if over and above the feelings of natural affection, the father has entertained towards his child the feeling of spiritual affection, if he has regarded the child as the heir of immortality, and has dedicated him, as Samuel, from his earliest days to God, then, indeed, he may lawfully anticipate a re-union with his child, and expect from that re-union a great measure of happiness. There are feelings here brought into the account, which may be justly supposed to survive our dissolution, and to be only strengthened by the great change which has to pass upon our nature. The father may well think of renewing his converse with his child, on the glory, and majesty, and goodness of God, in a land where both shall have fuller discoveries of the divine attributes, and nobler capacities for comprehension. He may dwell with ecstasy on the prospect of entering again on the intercourse which death interrupted, seeing that his intercourse was of a holy and heavenly character : and as he remembers his endeavours to instil into the young mind a reverence of the Almighty, and his delight in tracing signs of growing love to the Creator, and his pleasure when the object of his solicitude proposed questions or made remarks indicative of a desire to know more of the Redeemer ; O he cannot be wrong in looking forward with ardent expectation to the time when he shall again be searching with his child into the mighty truths of creation and redemption, and when they shall traverse, in rich and blessed communion, those vast tracts of knowledge, of which, even had life been prolonged, they could not, while on earth, have explored more than the outskirts. And if the father have many children, with reason to hope of each that God has blessed his endeavours to instil the best of knowledge into their minds, we believe him to be quite right in placing each child in his pictures of the future, and in imagining that much of his gladness will consist in walking with those whom he was instrumental in teaching, through the streets of the heavenly city, and examining with them into the mysteries of grace, and chaunting with them the praises of the Lord.

Yea, and if instead of supposing that the father follows his children to the grave, we suppose him dying in a good old age, with his children gathered

round his bed, we know not why the thought of re-union with his weeping family, should not be amongst those by which he is specially cheered. He cais to mind all his anxieties, and toils, and prayers, on behalf of those by whom he is surrounded. And must he be separated from the objects of so much care, and so much love? Having trained them in the ways of righteousness, must he leave them just as they seem about to reward all his labour? O, it was not upon earth that he looked for that full recompense, and if they indeed be the children of God, he knows he shall meet them where "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying." It shall be a reward to him, such as no thought can measure, to be privileged to appear with his whole family before God, and say, "Behold I, and the children that thou hast given me." It shall be a reward than which he cannot imagine a greater, a hope which shall throw a sunshine over his fainting countenance—that of having all those who have called him parent upon earth, as his companions in the magnificence of eternity; so that when he wakes up at the resurrection, there may not be one missing, but the unbroken household go forward into the inheritance of the saints.

He knows, indeed, that if his labours had been wholly in vain, and his children had refused to remember their Creator, God would supply every want, and fill those capacities for happiness which himself had bestowed. While he can feel that God has blessed him in the performance of duty, he feels also that it is the plan of the divine dealings to maintain a strict connexion between the performance and the recompense; and that as he has found a present delight in the success of his labours, he shall find a future, though far higher, in intercourse with those whom he taught to know the Lord. And therefore he cannot look at the family without feeling that those he leaves behind are in some measure entrusted with his reward; and that if they fail to hold on in the path-way of righteousness, they will withdraw portions of that blessedness on which his dying gaze is fixed. He cannot take his last farewell, and commend those he loves for the last time to God, without remembering that they have a battle yet to fight, in which they may be conquered; and that if indeed they yield to temptation, and fall away from God, they will sully that rich brightness, and diminish that deep gladness, whose prospect has sustained him as life ebbed away. And therefore can you marvel, can you account it inconsistent with his belief that God should be all in all through eternity, if he gather up his remaining strength, as we supposed the Apostle to do in uttering the words of our text, and beckoning to the weeping group who are lamenting his departure, say to them in broken, but most thrilling and affectionate accents, "Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward."

Now, in thus transferring the inquiry from the minister of the church to the father of the family, we have not at all lost sight of the point to be discussed. Our task is now to shew, that the rewards which men are permitted to expect in heaven may depend upon others, as well as upon ourselves; so that there may be true propriety in my calling on another to take heed, lest he diminish my recompense. The father may thus call upon his child, inasmuch as being entrusted with the training of that child, his chief reward must lie naturally in its progress and advancement. *As a man* he might receive rewards of various kinds for the performance of duty, but *as a father* he can only be rewarded through

his child. Thus, also, with the minister : he is bound by the very closest of ties to those who receive the Gospel from his lips ; so that in a spiritual sense he and they may be said to constitute one family. And it is quite possible that the minister may labour in vain, just as the father may labour in vain, and that he may not prevail upon any to forsake their evil ways. And we are sure, as we before intimated, that if this melancholy failure be not justly chargeable upon himself, his happiness shall be provided for in another state of being, and that though unsuccessful, he shall receive a due reward from the Judge of the quick and the dead. But, if you can follow the distinction, it will be as a *man*, rather than as a *minister* he is rewarded. The father can be rewarded as the father only through his children ; and the minister as the minister only through his congregation. Either, indeed, may be eventually perfectly happy in some other way : but consider man in his parental capacity, and his reward must lie with his offspring ; consider him in his ministerial capacity, and his reward must lie with his people. Hence you find St. Paul addressing the Thessalonians in words which may be considered almost parallel to those of our text : " For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing ? are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming ?" So then, if the Thessalonians, and the other converts had, to a man, fallen away, St. Paul, according to his own representation, would have remained without a crown of rejoicing at the second advent of Christ. Yet we cannot suppose that he would have remained without *any* crown or without *any* recompense : we are sure that his vast labours would not have gone unrewarded, because they had been fruitlessly directed against vice and superstition. He would have obtained a crown, but it could not have been that *ministerial crown*, which is proposed as of pre-eminent lustre in the prophecies of Daniel : " They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever." The great work which the Apostle had been set to do was the winning souls to Christ ; and his appropriate recompense must lie in the having souls with him through eternity as trophies of his success : and therefore might he well be jealous over every convert, as over one of the jewels of his crown, which could not be abstracted without diminishing the splendour of the diadem. He might urge to consistency and steadfastness each portion of his children, not merely because satisfied that to waver or relax would be fatal, but because persuaded that his own reward would be diminished by his " losing the things which he had wrought." And the case may have been the same with John ; neither is it different, unless in degree, with every minister of Christ. We cannot but think, that if God make us instruments in the converting of a sinner from the error of his ways, the man thus reclaimed will contribute one great element to our everlasting portion. We cannot but feel, that whatever the recompense which might be afforded us in other capacities, there can be none in the capacity of an ambassador from God which is not made up, we might almost say, with those who have hearkened to the overtures of pardon. Whatever may be his reward as a man, if he appear, and that through no fault of his own, at the judgment-seat of Christ, without the least fruit of his labours, where is his reward as a minister, if in all the rejoicing myriads who are commemorating the means by which they were translated from darkness into marvellous light, there be not a solitary individual who can point him out as the honoured instrument of overcoming the obduracy of his unbelief, and write the name in all the

anthems of thanksgiving which he pours forth when remembering the divine dealings with his soul ; we still think that if while other labourers in the vineyard have gathered around them a company of delighted associates, those whom they had warned, and exhorted, and persuaded on earth—whose sick beds they had cheered with the promises of the Bible, and whose dying hours they had irradiated with the light of eternity, he is to be alone in the midst of this mighty gathering, and feel that with all his labour he has added not a unit to the vast population of heaven. And as every fresh convert must be reckoned a fresh addition to the whole portion, so must that portion depend for its magnitude on the advance of the converts in righteousness ; and the greater the progress made under his preaching, the greater we know will be the reward reached by the converts themselves, and therefore also, we believe, the greater the glory becomes to their spiritual instructor. If they constitute his crown, in proportion as themselves are radiant will that crown be splendid ; for they cannot increase their own happiness without increasing his. So that what shall a minister do but watch with intense interest over his flock ; not only as longing that men may be converted, but that those who are converted may grow in grace and in knowledge ? Must he not feel that his own interests are indissolubly bound with those of his people , so that if any one of his converts fall away, it is a diminishing of the brightness of his eternity ; and if any one go forward to a great stature in godliness, it shall ensure a higher measure of what is glorious and imperishable ? Is it not then, in the strictest sense true, that the preacher's reward is in the keeping of his hearers, and that those hearers may be invited by a care for his welfare, as well as their own, to take heed that they walk worthy of their vocation. If death were now to snatch away the minister, or if he were on the eve of removal to another scene of duty, we know not why he might not assemble his people around him, as the father his children, and conjure them with all affectionateness and earnestness to rob him not of the recompense which he looks for hereafter ; we know not why he might not appeal to them, as he bids them farewell, and entreat them, by the memory of his labours in their cause, not to injure by their lapses and lukewarmness, his portion at the resurrection of the just ; and we know not why he may not call to him, one after another of the sorrowing assembly, and exhort to the holding fast the confession of faith, and urge to the pressing towards the mark for the prize of the high calling in Christ, and thus conclude by throwing himself, as it were, on their love and their gratitude, exclaiming, “ Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.”

But there was another head, under which we proposed briefly to seek materiel to reply to the question, how the minister's recompense can be dependent upon the people. We were to consider THE SHARE HE OUGHT TO HAVE IN THEIR PRAYERS AND THEIR SUPPLICATIONS. We are quite persuaded, that a congregation are apt to think and to speak much of their dependence on their minister, and comparatively to overlook in how vast a degree their minister is dependent upon them. The congregation look to be assisted by the minister in spiritual things, and perhaps scarcely ever remember, that the minister looks to be assisted by the congregation. Whereas it is not to be calculated how much the congregation have the minister in their hands, and

how greatly his power of assisting depends on his being assisted. There is no relationship, as we believe, the parties in which so act on each other, as in that which subsists between the minister and his people. If, for example, there be an appearance of languor in the audience, it is marvellous how rapidly and how fatally it will tell on all the energies of the preacher. One sleeper may infuse lethargy into a whole sermon. The congregation expect to be excited, and is restless unless the preacher work it up by main force into an attitude of attention ; whereas, if the attention had been manifestly given from the first, it would in all probability have communicated vigour to the speaker ; the simple fact that he is listened to imparting animation to the man, who would be quite beaten down by the apparent indifference. Thus the hearers are often answerable for all that want of life of which they naturally complain : they shew no signs of life themselves, and then blame the preacher for catching a portion of their apathy. You may be well assured, that an audience exert a scarcely calculable power over the party by whom they are addressed ; that the wandering eye, and the manifest restlessness, are often quite enough to strip a sentiment of all the point and all the force which it would have gained from an earnest delivery ; and that many a minister, who would throw his whole soul into the sermon, if he perceived that his hearers were intent on the business for which they were assembled, is shrivelled into a feeble, spiritless disclaimer by the aspect of insensibility which pervades the whole church. It seems quite unreasonable to expect, that the heat of one man is to thaw the ice of a thousand ; the almost certainty is that he will be congealed by the wintry mass around him. But this is only an inconsiderable instance of the power which a congregation exerts over its minister : it greatly depends on themselves what shall be the *matter* as well as what the *manner* of his sermons. They are possibly dissatisfied with his discourses, and do not find them adapted, it may be, to their own state and feelings : but is it their prayer to God that he would guide their teacher to the choice of such subjects, or to such a manner of handling them, as may exactly suit their spiritual necessities ? His preaching, for example, may not be, according to their judgment, sufficiently experimental : do they, in place of blaming him, pray for him, that he may have a stronger personal experience of religion, without which he cannot preach experimentally ? His sermons, they may urge, give an undue preference to one set of doctrines, and comparatively overlook another : do they, instead of blaming him, and expatiating on his deficiencies, whenever they have opportunity, entreat the Almighty on his behalf, that he may be enabled to divide with greater faithfulness the Word of life ? They think that he is not earnest enough, that he is not affectionate enough in his entreaties, not decisive enough in his rebukes : but do they make these alleged faults the subjects of supplication to God, that they may be corrected ; or of mere conversation, that the minister may be depreciated ? The remedy, we are bold to say, for half the preacher's defects, lies with his congregation : if they pray for their instructor as those should pray who regard him as the ordained instrument through whom they are to be instructed, we are confident that he would be better and better taught in heavenly things, and therefore, better and better able and bold to teach others also. The earnest and continued intercession of his people would prevail to his being raised to higher stations in Christian experience ; and he would thence fetch celestial communications that would well repay all the petitioning

of which he had been the subject: and if he were well sustained in every sermon that he delivers, and in his every visit to the sick, and in his every remonstrance with the careless and the profligate, and in his every attempt to abstract important truth from each portion of Scripture—if he were well sustained by the prayerful upholding of the men of faith in his flock, then have we every warrant for believing, that he would increasingly answer to the description which St. Paul gives of an exemplary pastor: “A workman that needeth not to be ashamed, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” If there were set over a congregation a man lamentably defective, yea, and erroneous in his views of the Gospel, we should have the greatest hope of seeing him rapidly transformed into a full and staunch preacher of the truth, if we knew that numbers, in place of decrying his sermons and forsaking his church, were plying the mercy-seat on his behalf, and entreating the descent upon the minister of the quickening and illuminating Spirit. And with all their confidence in the power of prayer—a confidence fully justified by the statements of Scripture—we necessarily hold, according to what is implied in our text, that the minister is partly dependent on his people for his reward. He is greatly dependent on their prayers; and those prayers may carry him forward in his arduous employment when otherwise he might be languid and overborne; they may bring down upon him a larger measure of grace, and thus ensure a larger measure of success. Strengthened by these prayers, the weapons in his hands may be “mighty through God to the casting down strong holds,” which else would have resisted his every assault. If not, what means St. Paul by saying to the Thessalonians, “Finally, brethren, pray for us”—what for?—“that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified.” The Apostle seeks the prayers of the Church with the distinct object, that he may be more efficient as a minister of Christianity. We dare not say that, had these prayers been withheld, he would have been as signal in the conquests which he won over idolatry. And if we may thus argue, that ministerial success is greatly dependent on the prayers of the people, so also it is manifest must be the ministerial reward. The reward must increase with the success, and the success will be advanced by the prayers. Why then may not the minister speak to the people, as though persuaded they have the power in their hands of increasing the recompense to be awarded him at the judgment? If they perform a clear duty, and assist him by their prayers, they will themselves be more instructed and more strengthened in righteousness, and therefore advanced to a higher grade in everlasting blessedness. Their minister, moreover, will obtain fresh energies for his work, and thus be instrumental in “adding daily to the church of such as shall be saved.” And on both accounts—on account of their own advancement, and on account of gathering in new converts—they may be said to add brightness and magnificence to the minister’s recompense. The minister, therefore, may justly feel, that by neglecting, or feebly discharging the duty which they owe him, his congregation may take off from the splendour of his portion, as well as from their own. They cannot withhold their prayers without injuring themselves; and they cannot injure themselves, so nice is the relationship, without injuring him.

Well then may he entreat them on his own account, to look to their conduct as professedly followers of Christ. Well may he, as he draws forward his days, and catches glimpses of the land where the saints walk in white, entertain a

**IS OPENED IN THE CONVERSION OF ST. PAUL TO EVERY PENITENT, CONTRITE SINNER.**

Had we beheld Saul of Tarsus in the career of his unchecked fury, and witnessed his exceeding madness against the disciples of Jesus, we should have assuredly said, that if there were heavier chains, or a deeper dungeon in the world of woe, they would certainly be reserved for such an implacable enemy of true godliness. And yet (I charge you to admire the inexhaustible riches of the grace of God) even to this man, even to this Saul of Tarsus—this man, of all blasphemers the most blaspheming, of all persecutors the most persecuting, of all injurious men the most injurious—this man is admitted to the goodly fellowship of the prophets, he is numbered with the noble army of martyrs, and makes a distinguished figure in the glorious company of the apostles. If you ask why all this was done; what was the great end of the Head of the Church in this conversion of St. Paul; I come to my text for an answer: “For this cause,” he says, “all this was done. For this cause I, such a cruel man, such an injurious man, obtained mercy, that in me first (not first in point of time, the stream of mercy did not begin to flow with the conversion of St. Paul)—“first in guilt, first in blasphemy, first in persecution, first in injury, first in touching the apple of the Redeemer’s eye—in me first who had sinned more daringly than others, who stand in the first class of the lost—in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-suffering;” such long-suffering as none but a God can shew; the obstinacy of kindness (if you will pardon me the phrase) opposed to the obstinacy of transgression: “for a pattern” something you may look at, and copy—“to them which should hereafter believe to life everlasting.” And, blessed be our God, this conversion of St. Paul, is a pattern for the most abandoned blasphemer in church, if such a man has strolled by what is called chance into the sanctuary, just to see what was doing and saying. Though he may have sunk into the lowest depths of wickedness, here is something to which he may look for comfort, in hope of the mercy of his offended God.

I might stop the discourse here, and leave you just to see the encouragement you have from this one instance alone, to entertain the highest hope from the loving-kindness and long-suffering mercy of God. But St. Paul is not the only specimen of this mercy. Let me point you to one or two cases; and will go back to the Old Testament for one of them.

Manasseh was a monster of barbarity—perhaps the most barbarous of men. We sometimes speak of Nero as a cruel monarch; but I very much doubt whether he was equal to Manasseh. Read the records of the atrocious wickedness that marked the earlier years of Manasseh. Behold him as soon as he succeeded, quite in the vigour of his youth, to the throne of Judea, tearing down that goodly structure of national religion and happiness, which the piety and zeal of his father Hezekiah had just brought to perfection. His father Hezekiah had not been permitted to die till he had established the form of divine worship of God in the land; and produced such an improvement in the minds of the people as seemed to give promise of better things for the time to come. It seemed to be the avowed and impious design of his son to undo all his father had done. No sooner did he ascend the throne, than the first thing he did was, to forsake the worship of the true God. From being a believer in Jehovah he turned to be a believer in Baal. He set up the image of Baal in the temple; not in the

outer court of the Gentiles, nor in the holy place, but in the very "holy of holies," in the place of the ark of the covenant, that particular part of the sanctuary where Jehovah had fixed his peculiar residence. The next thing he did in barbarity was consenting to devote his own children to a heathen god. Conceive of a father doing this. We have heard of Herod signing an edict to destroy all the male children in Bethlehem under two years: but never did we hear of a father, till we hear of Manasseh, devoting his own children to death, and causing them to pass through the fire to Moloch. He put to death an immense number of the Lord's prophets, and shed innocent blood till the streets of Jerusalem floated down with human gore. Among the prophets whom he slew was the venerable and evangelical prophet Isaiah—the very man whose sermons he had heard over and over again—the very man who had been admitted to his father's intimacy, who had been his friend and counsellor, Manasseh caused to be sawn asunder between two planks of wood, in order to testify his abhorrence of the doctrines of Isaiah, and the religion of his father. He not only multiplied his crimes to this extravagant degree, but he poisoned the princes, perverted the manners of his subjects, and did them more injury than the most detestable of the Roman emperors ever did. I think the records we have of Manasseh's barbarity, of his scenes of iniquity, exceed the horrid doings of the Roman Nero.

But I am not going to stop here. Here is horror: but I am only pointing to the shadows of the picture; it has a bright side also. This haughty rebel was subdued; aye, and converted. The way of God's providence often leads to the manifestation of his mercy. The Assyrians, who had kept their forces away during the time of his father, invaded the land: Manasseh was taken prisoner, deprived of his kingdom, and led captive to Babylon. His imprisonment, under the blessing of God's Holy Spirit, awakened him to reflection; he saw and confessed the baseness of his former life, and cried to God for mercy; that mercy which is vouchsafed to all whom the Holy Spirit inclines to ask for it in the way of God's appointment, was granted to Manasseh: and he who had once exhibited as sad a specimen as ever was exhibited, of the desperate depravity of human nature, became the child of forgiving love, and the heir of immortal life. Who then after this shall despair?

But I have not yet done. Look next at the case of the Corinthian Church. I need not tell you, that the inhabitants of Corinth were proverbially abandoned and corrupt. Some of them indulged in such abominable vices, and were habituated to such outrageous acts, as were a reproach to human nature, bad as human nature is. And yet even these sons of iniquity, these slaves of sensuality, were washed, were justified, were sanctified. They were washed in the precious blood of the dying Redeemer; they were sanctified by the powerful operation of his blessed Spirit; and justified through the righteousness of the Son of God. Those who were once the burden of the earth, are now the joy of heaven, and the delight of angels.

The time would fail to tell of all the triumphs of redeeming mercy; I will only mention one other instance which loudest of all proclaims the Lord as "the Lord God, merciful and gracious, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin." And it is an instance which exceeds, not only all I have mentioned, but all that can be imagined: and which, if I were to be so careless as to forget,

than that we should have gript the rock for our bed, or found our birth-place in the oozy channels of the deep?

" Let us praise our heavenly Father that he hath made us with more understanding than the beasts of the field, with more wisdom than the fowls of heaven; that he hath made us 'a little lower than the angels,' and 'crowned us with glory and honour,' and 'made us to have dominion over the works of his hands,' and hath 'put all things under our feet, all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field, the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the path of the sea.' 'Lord, what is man that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man that thou visitest him?'

" And further, my brethren, from looking on the honour and blessing of our birth-place and inheritance, look upon the treatment which you have received at the hand of your Creator, and say, if it doth not speak him more than fatherly in his love and carefulness. Our bread hath been provided, our water hath been sure; we have been protected from the summer's smiting heat, and from the winter's blasting cold; the damps of the night have not settled chill upon our raiment, nor hath 'the pestilence which wasteth at noon-day' blown its deadly blast across our path. The Lord hath been the length of our days, and the strength of our life, from our youth up to this day. And hath he not surrounded us with kinsmen and friends? Or, if we be alone, hath he not proffered to us his own fatherhood, and the brotherhood of the Creator of all things? And haply he hath surrounded us with lovely children, to stand in our room when we are gone; and he hath given us a house and habitation among men; and he hath found us in the sight of men more favours than we have deserved. Hath he not hidden your faults from the knowledge of men? Hath he not been very tender to your reputation, which by a turn of his providence he could have blasted? Hath he not restrained the wrath of our enemies? No sword hath come up against us; no famine hath pinched our borders; no plague, nor pestilence, nor blasting winds have bitten us; no weapons formed against our liberty have ever prospered. Another year hath told out its months and seasons; but each day hath brought our necessary meals, and luxurious entertainments, and each night hath brought its refreshment of dewy sleep; each Sabbath its rest and blessed ministry of salvation. The heavens have dropt down fatness on our tabernacles; very pleasant are our dwelling-places; and the places where our lines have fallen be very good. Yea, the exile doth visit our shores for a place where he may lay his aching head, and rest his weary feet. Yea, the slave doth touch our shores in order that he may be free. The land is good, and floweth with milk and honey, yea, the land is a good land which the Lord hath given us, where justice and judgment, where right and equity, where piety and religion, have taken up their abode at the command of God. And every man of us doth sit under his own vine and fig-tree, none daring to make him afraid. And God is our father, and the Holy One of Israel our preserver. He that was the God of our fathers hath also been the God of their children. We will praise him, we will teach our children the praises of him, of our Father who dwelleth in the heavens, yet pitcheth his tabernacle in the midst of us."—REV. E IRVING.

## CHRIST'S APPLICATION OF HIS WORK TO BELIEVERS.

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REV. J. SANDFORD, A.M.

LONG ACRE EPISCOPAL CHAPEL, JULY 19, 1835.

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"He shall save his people from their sins."—MATTHEW, i. 21.

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IT was the avowed declaration of Paul to know nothing in his preaching but "Jesus Christ and him crucified." Not that he meant to confine himself to one solitary topic, to the exclusion of any thing revealed in Scripture, but to intimate that the Lord Jesus was himself the substance and centre of all saving truth, and that from his cross were to diverge all the beams that should carry divine light and life into the human heart. He only meant that the cross of Christ was the appointed instrument for the illumination and conversion of the world; that it was to supply faith with all its pleas, and practical piety with all its motives; and to be the storehouse and channel of all spiritual gifts and graces. He only meant to echo that declaration of his Lord, that "to know Christ was life eternal;" and to intimate that there was not a topic given by inspiration of God, and profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, which the Saviour's cross did not supply.

The Lord Jesus Christ may be said to "save his people from their sins" by making satisfaction for us to God, and by obtaining gifts and graces for us. We are now to consider Christ's *application* of his gifts and graces unto us. This, it will be seen, is the all-important portion of the subject: for O! what matters it that satisfaction is rendered, and gifts and graces are obtained, if we be never the better for them? True, Christ has paid all that justice required to purchase our salvation, and hath treasured up for us in the covenant of grace all that is required to set us free from sin, and unite us to everlasting communion with him: but unless we be *personally* interested in the covenant, what does it advantage us at all? It would only be subject matter of interminable regret that a treasure so abundant had not been possessed by us; that with the waters of life present to our lips, we had been unable to taste of them, and that a banquet of rich and satisfying viands was provided only to mock us. Could we, therefore, beloved brethren, shew what Christ has done in pacifying God's displeasure, and opening up the way of your return, without shewing you how Christ is also to take you by the hand, and introduce you into the fatherly embrace of your God, we should be mocking human misery by exciting hopes which cannot be satisfied.

But we are to observe now upon the manner in which the Saviour institutes the soul into all the fruits of his mediatorial transactions with the Father, and

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before his conversion. If Saul of Tarsus were living in this day, and were walking about with us, and taking his place among our congregations—if there was any individual among us who was near heaven, we should say it was Saul of Tarsus. He had profited in the Jew's religion above many his equals, of equal standing with himself in point of talent, erudition, and high station : no man was more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of the fathers than he was, determined to resist any encroachment : and in all that was considered virtuous, lovely, and of good report, he signalized himself in general estimation. Surely we should say, “Here is a man fit for heaven on the principle of merit.” But St. Paul had been taught the difference between his own religion, in which there was so much short-coming, and the obedience of Christ, in which there was no short-coming. He felt the force of the alternative, and therefore he was so anxious to win Christ, not having his own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ.

Let these sayings find a lodgment in your heart ; that, while they who trust in the general mercy of God do so at the expense of his whole character, they who trust in his mercy as it is manifest in unison with justice in the work of Christ, may surely hope for everlasting salvation ; and their hope shall never be confounded.

How delightfully, then, we are brought to the last remark I shall make : No humble penitent whose heart has been softened need despair of obtaining mercy, so long as there is an ear willing to listen to the precious truths of the Gospel—so long as there is a tongue to ask its blessings—so long as there is a heart to desire those blessings—so long as these blessings are obtained. Come, then, ye weary, heavy-laden, trembling sinners ; come to Christ to-night with a burden too heavy for you to bear : O do not carry it any longer : yes, carry it a little way ; but not further than to the foot of the Redeemer's cross : carry it there, casting all your care on Him who on that accursed tree gave such touching proofs of caring for you. O hear his voice as he hangeth there : “Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” “Ah !” say you, “these are certainly encouraging exhortations, and we have heard them, and have done as we were bid ; and we have carried our burden there, but we have not obtained rest : the agony of our sins still, still cleaves to us. Our souls have long been in heaviness, by reason of strong convictions, and we are almost beginning to fear that our hope is perishing.” O, my brother, thou art not patient ; thou art falling into the sin of not waiting. But wait : if you have thrown down the burden, and expect immediate relief, you have been forgetful of the days, weeks, and months, that you allowed to pass before you brought your burthen there. You have God's word to rest upon, that in due season you shall have relief: “Ask, and it shall be given you ; seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you.”

I beseech every burdened sinner, if he forget the whole of the sermon besides, to remember this word—that you are not permitted in any part of your Christian experience to interpret the *delay* of mercy into *denial* of mercy. You are not to say, that because God will not give you mercy when you ask it, you will not have it at all. O beware of charging God with want of wisdom : he is as wise as he is kind ; he has infinitely good reason for every thing he does, and for every chastisement to which he submits you. Look at Paul ; it was three days

after he was arrested in his career to Damascus before he obtained spiritual comfort. O, the agony of those three days! He could not eat; his friends brought him the cup of refreshment, but he could not drink. O the agony of the penitent, broken-hearted, Saul of Tarsus! But you see that after this agony of three days, Paul was brought out of his trouble. And why was all this? To shew him what sin is; to make him feel the need of prayer; to dig deep, and lay low the foundation of the superstructure that was to rise so high. So perhaps with you: the longer you have been kept waiting for mercy, the more remarkable monument of grace God intends you to be. Wait, then, I beseech you, wait patiently on the Lord, and he will incline unto you and hear your cry. The longer you have been sighing for mercy, the nearer it certainly is to you. Perhaps some messenger of mercy is now hastening his way towards you; and perhaps the next Christian you meet may speak a word in season to your heart: perhaps the next sermon that you may hear, may let in the light of heaven on your soul, and chase away all the shadows of your present deep despair. The vision is yet for an appointed time; but though it tarrieth, wait for it: wait for it, and it will surely come; it will not tarry.

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And then, lastly, we may learn, that it is by the resurrection of our Lord, that *he removed every bar to our intercourse with heaven*, for the power of Christ's resurrection reaches to all the evils which obstruct our approach to God, and hinder our filial fellowship with him. Christ, when he <sup>re</sup>appeared from the rocky barrier that confined him, removed every obstacle to the free and filial fellowship of the believer's soul with him. The hand-writing of ordinances that was against us, Christ took it away. The law which had laid its arrest, and pronounced its curse upon us, Christ fulfilled it, and closed its mouth for ever. The great enemy, the devil, Christ trampled him under his feet, spoiled his principalities and powers, leading him that had led into captivity captive. Death, Christ foiled it in the very act of bursting from its grasp. Sin, Christ abolished both its guilt and its power, when, as the first-begotten from the dead, he exhibited the risen human frame which sin had never sullied.

But I observe, secondly, that Christ may be said to apply the fruits of his passion by the virtue of **HIS PREVAILING INTERCESSION**.

There were two parts of the priestly office which Christ had to perform. First, to render atonement for the sins of the people; and, secondly, to enter into the holy of holies, to spread the blood of sprinkling on the mercy-seat, and to make intercession. When, therefore, the Lord Jesus had offered his own blood on the altar of justice at Calvary, and had risen from the dead in proof of the acceptance of his atonement, he ascended into heaven, and took his seat on the right hand of God, to prosecute his work as a Saviour, by his prevailing intercession. And there he sits to discharge the same gracious office which he took upon him when he returned to the heavenly courts, on his ascension, ever living and ever labouring to forward the salvation of those that trust in him.

Now I would divide what I have to say of Christ's intercession into three parts. First, I will shew how Christ intercedes; secondly, shew upon what ground he intercedes; and, thirdly, shew how his intercession is available in applying the fruits of his redemption.

First, then, *how does Christ intercede for his people?* He interceded once, as we know, in audible language; falling down, and stretching out his hands, and addressing his heavenly Father in articulate words of prayer and supplication. But he intercedes to-day in the very act of appearing in the heavenly presence. He has no need to utter a single word; his risen and glorified human frame is enough: for how came it there but as the purchase of his infinite merits, and as the representative of those for whom he died and lives to plead; Christ's mere appearance in heavenly places is a constant and prevailing act of intercession. He has only to shew himself; for his flesh is a constant remembrance of the condition of those of whose nature he is a partaker. He has only to point to his pierced side, and to the prints of the nails, to establish the claim which he has to urge upon the compassion and justice of heaven. Were it possible that the Father ever should forget the relationship in which redeemed sinners stand to him, a single glance at the form that was once born in a manger, and which agonized and died upon the cross, would be enough to interest his sympathies on our behalf. So that when we speak of the act of Christ's intercession, we refer to the appearance of his body in heavenly places

as our Surety who has rendered satisfaction for us, and treasured up his merits for us; and who by the very form which he wears to-day, makes a mute, but pathetic and prevailing appeal.

And then if it be inquired, *upon what grounds does the Saviour intercede,* what is the ground of his intercession, it has been already stated: the ground of Christ's advocacy is the blood he shed. Without this oblation to shew before God, his intercession would have been of no avail. It was Christ's satisfaction at Calvary which qualified him to intercede. Thus the typical high-priest first shed the blood of the sacrifice; but when he went into the holy of holies he carried the blood with him, and sprinkled it on the justice-seat. In like manner Jesus carried with him into those heavenly places, of which the Jewish sanctuary was the type, his own blood, and held it up and sprinkled with it both the mercy-seat and the justice-seat. As we read in Hebrews, ix.: "But Christ being come an high-priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered at once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." Christ entered in, and stood before the justice-seat, and said, "I have paid all; I have suffered all: here is the blood I shed: I claim my reward." His reward consists in the salvation of penitent and believing sinners from amongst men: and in consideration of the appeal thus urged, "who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is ever at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." He pleads upon the ground of the propitiation he offered. Had he not himself been a propitiatory sacrifice, offered up to the Father's justice, he could not have been an advocate.

And surely, beloved, it is a thought full of encouragement to us, to know that in those heights, to which, if we are believers, we often raise our wishful eyes, and where alone we can find the rest our weary spirits are in search of, we have One unceasingly engaged for us. We know, that though the Lord Jesus is surrounded by the angelic hosts, and endless millions of shining spirits wait upon his slightest wish, and vie to do him service, yet he lives not in the supine enjoyment of his rich splendour, but is ever actively engaged for us his afflicted and tempted people. "Wherefore he is able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him;" for he is an Advocate that never slumbers: we may sleep, but he wakes; his eyes are always watching his people; his hand is continually protecting them: his ever-interceding suppliancy is continually going on in their behalf. While he pleads for them they are safe. He interposes, also, a rampart between the wrath of God, and between those who are this day in this place. And if we would believe it, the duration of this world, lying as it is in the embrace of the wicked one, and the long-suffering which is exercised towards sinners, are chiefly applicable to the advocacy which Christ employs in their behalf. He is waiting to see if any will hear his voice, and come to him, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to Christ.

And now I proceed to specify *some respects in which Christ's advocacy acts.*

First, in virtue of his intercession Christ lives to wield the sceptre of grace, and to conquer subjects to himself. He claims them as the price for which he covenanted when he undertook the championship of the subjugated world, and

But, secondly, it must be observed, that *God, who is the only true object of prayer, has rendered it a matter of positive and universal duty.* He has imposed it, by his own command, upon all the people of the earth. The obligation, my brethren, cannot but be reasonably and properly inferred from those relations which are revealed as essentially existing between man and God. Man, for example, being the creature, and God the Creator—man being the preserved, and God the Preserver—man being the recipient, and God the Benefactor—man being the subject, and God the Governor—man being the criminal, and God the Judge.

There are, besides, positive and distinct commands, the import of which it is perfectly impossible to mistake, and the force of which it is perfectly impossible to avoid. We are taught, for example, that men are to “pray always,” and “not to faint;” that they are to “watch” and “to pray;” that they are to “continue instant in prayer;” that they are to “pray without ceasing;” that “in every thing they are to pray always, with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit;” and that in every thing they are to “make known their requests by prayer and supplication, with thanksgivings unto God.” Directions are given upon every point connected with the ordained employment; misapprehension with respect to which we might conceive perfectly impossible: directions, for example, as to the manner; the medium through which prayer is to be performed—through the merit of the Atoning Sacrifice: directions as to the scenes in which prayer is to be performed—in the silence of the secret chamber, amid the enjoyments of the social circle, and in the assemblies of the great congregation: and directions as to the spirit in which prayer is to be performed—the spirit of humility, the spirit of faith, the spirit of earnestness, and the spirit of perseverance.

My brethren, the law which Jehovah has been pleased to reveal on the subject of prayer, must be regarded as involving every thing which can guide, and govern, and animate, and inspire. And strange and wondrous, indeed, it is, that to a law, involving, as it does, all that is overwhelming in power, as well as all that is melting in tenderness, men do not bow at all times in blended adoration and love. For ourselves, my brethren, be it our great and constant desire, to render the tribute that is due to Him; be it our frequent invitation one to another, “O come, let us worship and fall down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker;” and let it be our highest ambition, that we may live and die as men of prayer; that at length we may be transferred, as the monuments of its triumphant efficacy, to other and nobler worlds, where our employments will be those of rapturous and everlasting praise.

We have offered, my brethren, these brief observations upon the nature of the employment, the importance of which is assumed, for the purpose of rendering the way clear and easy for that which ought to be more impressive and more solemn, and to which I am now to request your attention at large, in the second proposed object in our address, namely, **THE NATURE OF THE HABIT, THE INDULGENCE OF WHICH IS CHARGED.** “Thou restrainest prayer before God.” Instead of submitting to, and absolutely obeying, the injunctions which God has imposed upon thee, and imposed upon all mankind, thou art guilty of holding back and preventing the exercise of supplication; although

thou art placed in such circumstances as to call thee to it properly, with more than common eagerness and intensity of soul. Without examining the case of Job particularly, it is our purpose here to notice some of those various modes in which men are pre-eminently guilty of restraining prayer before God. I shall make no apology, my friends, for using the utmost plainness of personal application; being desirous upon this occasion to declare faithfully, in this matter, what is the whole counsel of God.

And first, you observe, *he restrains prayer before God who altogether omits prayer.* This is an assertion so perfectly plain and palpable, that not a single proof need be urged in elucidation, or in demonstration of it now. Are there indeed any who indulge the habit to such an extent as this; and who contract the guilt in such a vileness and such a blackness as this? Why there are multitudes, not merely in those desolate and abandoned countries where the true God is excluded and unknown, but even in those countries where he has been revealed, and where he is openly professed, with regard to whom there is reason to fear, that their voice never utters the language, and their bosom never feels the spirit, of prayer unto Him from whom alone all blessings flow. In our own country it is notorious, that a vast proportion of our crowded population habitually and entirely neglect the public devotions of the house of God: and many, my brethren, are the families, who dream not of erecting an altar for the morning and the evening sacrifice: and many are the chambers tenanted by beings who hallow not their privacy, and who wake and slumber, and rise and retire, as if there was no Creator to adore, no transgressions to grieve over, no blessings to crave, no hell to avoid, no heaven to acquire, and no souls to be redeemed. There are, probably, not a few in the sanctuary of God to-night, whose social hearths, and whose secret chambers, all desolate and all shrineless, attest the awful charge. Prayerless men and prayerless women, I confront and I challenge you; and I exhort you now to ponder, and to repent, and to amend, lest that God whom you have insulted by your neglect, should launch upon you the lightnings of that fiery indignation, from whose stroke no victim can recover.

Again, secondly, he restrains prayer before God who *engages but seldom in prayer.* In the passages which have been quoted in the earlier part of our address, with respect to the obligation of prayer, you cannot but have observed how they involve, at the same time, the duty and the importance of frequency. Men are to "pray always and not to faint;" they are to "continue instant in prayer;" they are to "pray without ceasing;" "in every thing to make known their requests by prayer and supplication unto God." And truly, my brethren, if there ought to exist any proportion between the frequent reiteration of prayer, and the frequent recurrence of want, then, as want is constantly recurring, so supplication ought to form the appropriate and the regular habit of the life.

Such frequency you cannot but observe, further, is beautifully exemplified to us in the history of those holy men, who are presented to us as models for our constant imitation. You will remember, for example, the case of him who is called by the title of "the man after God's own heart." It was his resolution, "As for me I will call upon God; and the Lord shall save me;" "Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud; and he shall hear my voice." And upon another occasion, as we find in Psalm cxix. he exclaims, "At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto thee, because of thy righteous

## MOTIVES FOR THE CULTIVATION OF A CHRISTIAN DEPORTMENT.

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REV. J. PARSONS,

SURREY CHAPEL, FEBRUARY 3, 1825.

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"Do all things without murmurings and disputings : that ye may be blameless and harmless the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world ; holding forth the word of life ; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain."—PHILIPPIANS, ii. 14—16.

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THE conversion of man to God, my brethren, by the agency of the Holy Spirit, is justly recognized as a great and mighty change ; removing the soul from the danger to which unpardoned guilt had exposed it, and imparting an interest in those blessings, the value of which is commensurate with immortality. Yet it must not be supposed, that those upon whom the work of conversion has been accomplished, do not require frequent caution and exhortation, instrumentally to prevent their return to pollution ; and to sustain them in the cultivation of those principles and habits, which alone are consistent with the design of their holy vocation. The circumstances, the arrangements, and the relationships of their spiritual existence, render it needful that oftentimes their minds should be "stirred up by way of remembrance :" and he who conceiving himself to be the subject of divine grace, yet regards as unnecessary and uncalled for, the enforcement of obligations and responsibilities, is in imminent danger of a grievous and awful fall.

You doubtless have observed, that the addresses of the inspired apostles directed to those professing Christians in whose conversion they had been instrumental, and for whose spiritual prosperity they yearned, consisted in a great measure in exhortations to the practice of those various duties which the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ has enjoined. It of course becomes Christians, in every age and every circumstance of the world, diligently to ponder, and carefully to conform to the spirit of their beautiful and tender appeals, being satisfied only as they conform to their injunctions, following, to their full extent, "whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, lovely, and of good report."

It is our intention this evening, to endeavour to inculcate the impression of one of these inspired addresses upon you, as professing believers in the Gospel of the grace of God. And the exhortation, which in these words was addressed by the Apostle to the Philippian church, was one which from the circumstances of the age, and the requirements of the church, may be most powerfully commended to you: "Do all things without murmurings and disputings : that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world ;

holding forth the word of life ; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain."

It is proposed from these words to notice, in the first place, the deportment, the cultivation of which is commanded ; and, secondly, the motives by which the cultivation of that deportment is urged.

First, from the emphatic words that are brought before you, you are to notice, **THE CHRISTIAN DEPORTMENT, THE CULTIVATION OF WHICH IS COMMANDED.**

And here, you observe, is an exhortation as to the spirit which Christians are to cherish towards God ; an exhortation as to the spirit which they are to cherish towards other men ; and an exhortation as to the spirit which they are to cherish to the public interests, and the general welfare of the whole.

First, it will be observed, here is an exhortation as to *the spirit which Christians are to cherish towards God.* They are to "do all things," or to act in all things, "*without murmuring.*" The murmuring, my brethren, which in this place is deprecated, is unquestionably intended to present an impatient discontent against the Most High, as having imposed upon us laws, the observance of which is difficult, obedience to which we consider harsh and unreasonable. The indulgence of such a spirit on the part of unconverted men, must be considered as strictly universal. It may indeed conceal itself under various forms, and assume various disguises ; but there are none characterized by an unrenewed nature. who are not substantially guilty of murmuring against God. There is no little danger lest Christians themselves, yet subject to the influence of indwelling sin, should lapse into the same spirit of discontent, so that the exhortation was given on the part of the Apostle, to counteract, and, if possible, entirely to avoid it.

You, my brethren, who are the professors of the Gospel of the grace of God, are doubtless in the same danger to which we have referred, more frequently than you are willing to admit ; and you must therefore permit us to follow the example of the Apostle, in urgently and affectionately entreating you, constantly to cultivate and aspire after that spirit, of which murmuring is the disgraceful and the injurious converse. Reflect, my brethren, in regard to Him with whom you are called to do, that his yoke is easy and his burden is light : reflect that his commands are not grievous : reflect that in every instance they are given to prevent the injury of your souls : reflect that obedience to them is claimed as a testimony of love for the benefits which you have received ; "For this is love to God, that we keep his commandments :" and reflect, that as you wholly conform to them shall be his decision, essentially connected with a glorious recompence in heaven, which is to endure unchangeably and for ever.

If such reflections as those of which we have now given you the outline, with regard to the divine commandment, exercise their just and legitimate influence on your minds, you will then become separated from the spirit which it is the design of the Apostle to repudiate, and imbued with the spirit which it is the design of the Apostle to commend ; and you will obey, not tardily but with cheerfulness—not with murmuring, but with readiness : you will love the law of your God ; you will rejoice in his testimonies ; you will run in the way of his commandments ; and it will be the motto of your existence, as it was

cation. The spirit of importunity is the spirit of prayer; and where the one is not, the other never can exist. What beautiful examples do we find in the Scriptures of the necessity of importunity, and to its success. Listen to the narrative which is presented as an example to the end of time, in the history of Jacob, the father of the tribes of Israel, as recorded in that splendid passage which occurs in Genesis, xxxii. In a season, as he believed, of difficulty and extremity he was left in the shadows of the evening alone by the side of the brook; and there wrestled a man—a mysterious being, whom we have reason to believe was a pre-existent exhibition of the Lord Jesus Christ—there wrestled a man with him unto the breaking of the day—and when he, the visitor, saw that he prevailed not against Jacob, he touched the hollow of his thigh, as if for the purpose of interposing a new difficulty to the continued struggle, which was a type or representation of prayer—he touched the hollow of his thigh, and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him; and he said, as if he had obtained his advantage, “Let me go, for the day breaketh:” and the patriarch said, “I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. And he said, thy name shall no more be called Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with man, and hast prevailed. And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And”—as if the explanation were to be satisfactory—“he blessed him there. And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.” It is interesting to observe, that that example of importunity and its success, was presented at a distant period, by the prophet Hosea, for the purpose of exciting the importunity of the repenting people of God; for in Hosea, xii. 3, it is narrated, that Jacob “by his strength had power with God: yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed; he wept”—the type of his importunity—“and made supplication unto him: he found him in Beth-el, and there he spake with us; even the Lord God of Hosts; the Lord is his memorial,” of the effect of importunity in prayer.

Without detaining you, my friends, as we might, by continued quotations on this most important subject, we may refer you to one copied in the shape of a narrative, presented by Him whom we call our Master and our Lord. The disciples besought him, as we find in Luke, xi., “Lord teach us to pray.” He rendered them a model for supplication, and then he proceeded to shew the importance of importunity, as follows: “And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves: for a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him because he is his friend; yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth: And I say unto you, Ask”—that is importunately—“and it shall be given you; seek”—that is importunately—“and ye shall find; knock”—importunately—“and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh so receiveth; and he that seeketh so findeth; and to him that knocketh so, it shall be opened.”

My brethren, from these important testimonies from the general volume of Revelation, and from the reasonings which may be deduced from the moral states of moral relationship, and the moral prospects of the human soul, we come at once to the solemn conclusion, in which, doubtless, you have anticipated me, that he who does not cherish the spirit of importunity, is indeed guilty of restraining prayer before God.

My brethren, upon the churches of our native land there wants a new unction of this spirit. This spirit of importunity in prayer is slumbering amongst us; we know scarcely any thing by experience of what it is that has power with God and with man, and prevails. A coldness and a formality exist in the social exile, and in the assemblies of the great congregations of our people. Our own guilt is most grievous. We ought to aspire to tread in the steps of our nation's daughter; with regard to whom we are informed, that when it pleases the Almighty to visit them, as occasionally he has done, with pentecostal times of refreshing from his presence, such is the estimate of prayer, and such the spirit of prayer, that, if it be announced in one sanctuary that the most popular orator of the age would deliver a sermon, and that in another there would be an assembly for the purpose of humble prayer and supplication, the former would be well nigh deserted, while the latter would be completely crowded. Yes, my Christian brethren, it becomes us to aspire after imitating that high example: let us shake off the lethargy which has oppressed and degraded us; let us go with the whole heart to the contemplation of those various reflections, by which our fire may be kindled to a brighter and more lustrous flame. Let us think of the claims of God; let us think of the guilt of sin; let us think of the glories of heaven; let us think of the agonies of hell; let us think of the worth of the soul; let us think of the crowds, the countless crowds, of human spirits, that are yet travelling away from the glories of that heaven, and down to the miseries of that hell; and then say whether we should be satisfied, but as we become absolutely absorbed and consumed by the spirit of importunity in prayer. Thus possessing a new and unknown power, that shall compel the omnipotence of Jehovah itself to open wide the windows of heaven, and pour down his largest and most delightful blessings upon the whole expanse of this apostate and long disordered world—thus, my brethren, above all things we must aspire, never to restrain prayer before God.

It becomes us now, having examined in these remarks particularly the habit, the indulgence of which is charged, to notice as we proposed, thirdly, **THE EVILS, THE INFILCTION OF WHICH IS THREATENED.**

If you examine at your leisure, the subsequent part of the chapter, you will find it to be the basis of implication, that, as long as the patriarch indulged the habit of casting off fear, and restraining prayer before God, so long he would remain exposed to the infliction of almost overwhelming evils. Without examining the justice of the application that was made in the original text, we deem the principle to be plainly and absolutely established, that when men, in any of the modes to which we have referred, are guilty of restraining prayer before God, they expose themselves to the infliction of evils, against which the soul of man should most earnestly and most diligently guard.

Observe, brethren, here, that the habit of restraining prayer *prevents the*

pleas of existence, which ought to constitute the rule of guidance for all ages through all the world—a burning zeal for the glory of God, an intense and yearning compassion for the welfare of perishing souls, and the influence of that constraining love to Christ, under which we should judge, that “ if one died for all, then were all dead, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them and rose again.” Now it is upon the principles we have thus passed in review before you, we venture to state to you, you are all under obligation, directly and personally to affect the holding forth or the extension of the word of life; and it is thus that emphatically they will “ shine as lights in the world.” I am, of course, ignorant to what extent the professors of Christianity now present have fulfilled the duties to which we have adverted, but I will remind them that it should be their object more diligently to fulfil them. This exhortation, my brethren, is open to you all. You may hold forth the word of life, by going forth under the direction of your respective pastors, for the purpose of proclaiming the unsearchable riches of Christ in the ordinary assemblies of human congregations: you may do it by entering among the classes of the Sabbath-school, and there assisting to train another generation in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; you may do it by assisting in the circulation of the Holy Scriptures; you may do it by distributing those tracts and books which are written by pious and devoted men; you may do it by attempting to instruct your own family, your partners, your children, your servants, your dependents, that they too may be warned to “ flee from the wrath that is to come,” and “ behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world.”

My brethren, in order to achieve the purposes, and accomplish the triumphs of eternal mercy, the whole Church of the living God must become heated as with this Pentecostal fire; it must animate both the young and the old, the rich and the poor, the male and the female: and it is thus as it is pervaded and circulated, being attended with that prayer which has power with God, that we shall have, not drops, but showers, of blessings; that the celestial wind will sweep in its power over the expanse of the valley of vision; that all the dry bones will start up as an exceeding great army, to the praise and love of God, presenting a memorial of sovereign mercy, triumphant over the regenerated world.

This, then, is a brief exposition of the Christian deportment, the cultivation of which is commanded. We are to “ do all things without murmuring,” or without any discontent against the moral commandments of our God. We are to “ do all things without disputings;” cultivating, contrariwise, a spirit of attachment and love to all the followers of the Lamb. And we are to “ shine as lights in the world,” each in our different spheres, and according to our different talents, aiming that we may save sinners from death, and thus that we may hide a multitude of sins.

We are to proceed to notice, secondly, THE MOTIVES BY WHICH THE CULTIVATION OF THIS DEPORTMENT IS COMMANDED. We are to “ do all things without murmurings and disputings, that,” says the Apostle, “ we may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life, that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I

have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain." It is not of course supposed, that in this statement are involved all the motives by which the cultivation of Christian deportment might be urged; but there are such motives here presented as cannot rightly be viewed without producing a mighty power upon every candid and enlightened mind.

The motives to which we shall confine ourselves, are the following two. First, you will observe, that there is urged as a motive for this deportment *the just vindication of the Christian character in the presence of the ungodly world.* The Apostle reminds the saints whom he was now exhorting, that they were living amongst those whom he calls "a crooked and perverse nation;" a race of ignorant and polluted idolaters, who hated the doctrines of the cross, and to whom the exhibition of any inconsistency among the disciples of that doctrine gave a savage and malignant delight. He assures them, further, that as they exhibit the elements of Christian character, as he had commanded them, they would prove themselves, " blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke," or without any blighting imputation, as is the energetic import of the original expression, from the very adversaries of religion themselves, who for their success and their holiness would be compelled to render to the Gospel the tribute of their homage. This motive he urges on them to the last, and to the uttermost extent.

But, my Christian brethren, this motive must be applied to yourselves. You are living, as you well know, amongst a crooked and perverse nation; not a nation disgraced and branded by the savage abominations of Gentile heathenism, but yet a nation which, although nominally Christian, presents a vast population adverse to the doctrines of the atonement, and the interests of the religion of the Gospel. They are waiting for the halting and the falling of those by whom the principles of Christianity are professed; and they exult and they delight when they perceive aught that is inconsistent between the nature of the mandate and the conduct of the votary. If, my hearers, you do all things without murmurings and without disputings; if you shine as lights in the world, by holding forth the word of life, and move on in your path, steadily tracking the footsteps of Him whom you own as your ensample and your Lord; then the fire of malignant delight will be removed or extinguished, and the adversaries of the cross will be compelled to give honour to a religion which by you has been vindicated and owned.

The necessity of such an appeal among unconverted men, cannot be considered as secondary and insignificant when we observe with what frequency the Holy Scriptures have presented as a motive, the vindication of religion before an unholly world. Take the following examples: "Let your light so shine before men, that they seeing your good works may glorify your Father which is in heaven." And again: "Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time." "Give none occasion for the adversary to speak reproachfully." "Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evil doers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation." All these various exhortations proceed upon the assumption, that Christianity gains much as its votaries adorn it, and that Christianity suffers much as its votaries dishonour and violate its spirit and its design.

Look back on the past history of the Church: the lovely form of Christianity  
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appears before you with stained and tattered garments; and when you ask in spirit, "What are these wounds in thine hands?" she answers in plaintive and in touching tones, "These are the wounds wherewith I was wounded in the house of my friend." I would to God that the wounds inflicted on Christianity had never been other than those inflicted by the infidel and the blasphemer! My brethren, O that religion may never be struck by *you*; that religion may never be hindered by *you*; that it may be always admired, and vindicated, and honoured by *you*. Let it be the intense and the anxious desire of your soul to honour it. It is therefore you are urged to it; and cold and heartless must be he who does not answer the challenge, and does not feel the claim.

You will observe, again, secondly, there is urged as a motive for the cultivation of this deportment, *the joy which this exhibition will produce to the minister of the Gospel at the arrival of the last day.* "Do it," says the Apostle, "that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain." He here speaks as one by whom the ministry of the truth had been faithfully and anxiously exercised, whose feelings were bound up in the welfare and prosperity of those to whom the tidings of his exhortations were addressed, and who considered that he had a right to notice those feelings along with his ultimate prospects, as furnishing a powerful and overwhelming argument why his exhortation should be complied with, and his demand fulfilled. And, my brethren, in modern times, those who faithfully exercise the ministry of the Gospel before you, may rightly, and without being lords over God's heritage, but for the purpose of being fellow helpers of your joy—may rightly urge you to press onward in your course toward heaven, "that they may rejoice in the day of Christ, that they have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain."

The motive, as now presented, must be regarded as involving the following three principles, to which we shall briefly advert.

This motive, you observe, assumes, that *the correct and holy deportment of believers may be made the subject of public acknowledgment and recognition on the arrival of the last day.* There can be no such emotion felt as that of which the Apostle speaks, if there was not a public recognition and acknowledgment, on the arrival of the day of final retribution. There is no question on this subject, attending, as we ought, to the import of a single passage of the sacred writings. If you refer to Matthew, xxv. you find, that in that wonderfully powerful depiction of the scenery of the last judgment, the following recognition of the character of the righteous is said to proceed from the lips of the Judge: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungry, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungry, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Under some circumstances, my brethren, we might have detained you by noticing what we conceive the principal purposes for

which the holy deportment of the righteous will be thus publicly recognized on the arrival of the last day; but for the present we must forbear. We only state it as an inspiring thought, and I trust the inspiration is felt by not a few now in the sanctuary, that all we are enabled to be, by the influence of the divine grace, through the power of the Divine Spirit, will then be exhibited and displayed in the presence of assembled worlds.

You will observe, again, this motive assumes, that *the display of a holy deportment by the righteous will then be the cause of ministerial joy when the secrets of the last day shall be disclosed.* "That," says the Apostle, "I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain." He, as a minister of the Gospel, recognizes the acknowledgment of their deportment by the Judge, and that acknowledgment by the Judge is to him a source of gratitude and joy. My brethren, there is a joy felt by every faithful minister, amid the various events which succeed each other in the course of the Christian life. There is joy at the time of conversion, when the tear of penitence first flows, and when the energy of faith is first exercised: there is joy when the being who has been converted is beheld treading on in a course of consistency and holiness; and, especially, coming forth amid scenes of public exertion, to be the instrument of conversion to others, and to enlarge that empire which is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit: there is joy when the converted saint is beheld languishing on the bed of death, the inward man waxing stronger, while the outward man is waxing weaker, and when there bursts the death-cry of triumph, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." But no joy can ever equal that which is felt by the servant of God, when he beholds men whom he has been the instrument of converting and of preserving, standing radiant in all the light of the Redeemer's countenance, and all the splendour of the Redeemer's glory, to receive the tidings of acceptance, and to enter into the recompence of heaven. This, my brethren, is indeed an adequate recompence for every toil, and every difficulty, and every labour! O we would to God, looking round upon those amongst whom we stand, that we could anticipate your appearance, without exception, with us on the right-hand of the Judge on the day of retribution. And what happiness would thrill throughout the assembled multitude, if we could say to each other in spirit, in the language of this same Apostle, "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy."

And then we observe, finally, this motive assumes that *the joy connected with the ministry of the Gospel on the arrival of the last day, ought to form a powerful argument for the cultivation of the deportment to which your attention has been called.* You are called to hold forth the word of life: "Shining forth as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life; that we may rejoice in the day of Christ, that we have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain." Probably, my brethren, there are many amongst you who have been accustomed to attend long upon a faithful and an anxious ministry. We have not by any means rendered the thought now before us an adequate degree of attention and respectful regard. There are not a few who to the feelings of the public minister are almost entirely indifferent: and some, perhaps, are to be found whose hands are ready to pierce through the heart of the minister with many sorrows.

Contemplate, my brethren, the benefits which you receive from the ministry. Many of you owe to it your conversion to God: it was this which pricked you to the heart; it was this which led you to flee from the wrath to come; it was this drove you to behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world; it was this that led you to the cross; that clothed you in that imputed righteousness; and which gives you an inalienable right to acceptance on the arrival of the great day. Many of you know it was this which rolled away the burden from your oppressed spirits; and which in times of bereavement and dark affliction, lifted the light of the Divine countenance on you, and gave you peace. Then many of you have been indebted to it for knowledge; and you have been led on from being babes in the church until you have become young men and fathers in Christ, “able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled with all the fulness of God.” Many are indebted to it for bright and vivid anticipations of heaven; it has led you to the summit of the mount; it has placed you above the dark and cloudy atmosphere of time, and led you to look on to the delightful inheritance beyond the shadows of the grave; even the “inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.”

This has been the operation of the ministry to multitudes; and, in fact, in some measure, to all Christians now in the presence of God. Is it not right, my brethren, that you render a grateful return: and does not the propriety of that grateful return press upon you as another argument, and add to other obligations, why you should be more careful, more zealous, in the maintaining of a holy deportment, and the aspiring after augmented and extended usefulness? I charge you in the name of those pastors, upon whose ministry you may, in various denominations, be accustomed to attend, that ye fulfil this their joy. They “seek not your’s but you;” and what they desire is, that you should be snatched as a brand from the burning, and presented before the throne of God without spot, without blemish, or any such thing.” Then, my brethren, “do all things without murmurings and disputings, shining as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life; that they may rejoice in the day of Christ, that they have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.”

My brethren, we have purposely confined ourselves to the precise principles which the text itself legitimately and directly assists us to deduce. We are anxious, for many reasons, arising from the state of our churches and the public aspect of our affairs, to have these public exhortations fully and powerfully impressed on the mind of Christian men. If every believer now in the presence of God—and I trust a large proportion of you come under this character—if every believer would act without murmuring and without disputing, and would shine as a light in the world, holding forth the word of life; how different would soon become the aspect of our country and of the world! Would not the churches then arise, and shake themselves from the dust, and put on their beautiful garments? Would not Christianity then ascend its throne, where the diadem would sparkle on its brow, and where the sceptre would waive in its hand? And would it not then prepare for those final and majestic conquests, which are not to terminate till the whole world shall be turned to the knowledge of God, and the Saviour shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the rivers unto the ends of the earth?

My brethren, the revival of religion must begin in the Church: and more and more am I convinced of the maxim, which has been often stated, of the late excellent Mr. Ward, that "the spirit of 'missions'"—or we would say, the evangelization of our earth, Christianity—"the spirit of missions must evangelize the Church, before the Church can evangelize the world." Let us seek, and earnestly and importunately pray for, these times of refreshing in our own spirit, and then we may expect to bring in the unconverted, and, "fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners," go forth to render "the kingdoms of this world the kingdoms of our God and his Christ."

There are, my brethren, peradventure, some among you who, while professing to be Christians, have been guilty of backsliding from the practical exhibition of the excellency to which your attention has been called. I would entreat you to remember the awful and the terrible threatening of the inspired Apostle, to those who in such a state had existed, in addressing those who had gone back from their first love, and had given occasion, by their inconsistency, for the adversary to speak reproachfully: he says, "If after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." Ah, is it so with any now in the presence of God? Let them be warned; let them reform; let them turn; and let them hear the tender invitations of their God, following them in the scenes of their alienation: "Return, O ye backsliding children, and I will receive you, saith the Lord; and love you freely."

But many amongst you, my hearers, are peradventure those who regard not; of whom the minister of the Gospel will have no reason to rejoice on the arrival of the day of Christ. There are those with regard to whom sorrow will then be felt, if sorrow can then be felt. How many are here in a state of unconverted depravity; to whom the tidings of the Gospel have often been reiterated, and reiterated in vain; for whom tears have been shed in vain; for whom Bibles have been read in vain; for whom discourses have been preached in vain; exhortations, entreaties, invitations, all uttered in vain. We imagine your appearance before the judgment-seat of Christ: there stands the neglected minister to render an account of the forgetful and despising hearers. Can you, my hearers, follow out the imagination in the private recesses of your own mind, and not tremble? And do you think of his appearance to rejoice over many at the right hand of the tribunal, and of your own separation standing among the peeled and fleeting spirits, on the verge of the blackness of darkness at the last? Can you think of it without emotion, and without an immediate impulse to repent and turn to God? O what will be the everlasting frown, when in place of an invitation will be thundered a threatening; and you shall be made to depart into everlasting fire, which has been prepared for the devil and his angels!

Exercising the ministry of the Gospel of Christ among you, as we do now, we warn you of the end; "We pray you in Christ's stead that ye be reconciled unto God." "We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye

receive not the grace of God in vain." Heaven and hell are before you, glory and ruin are before you; salvation and damnation are before you: and now we tell you to choose. We are pure from the blood of all men: your blood be upon yourselves. But, my brethren, we cannot but hope that your minds shall be renovated, that your persons shall be accepted, and that on the great day of account we shall stand together, finding mercy of the Lord in that day.

May God grant you the consummation of all we can desire. May "we know in whom we have believed," and be "confident that he is able to keep what we have committed to him against that day." Amen.

THE NAMES OF GOD UNDER THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT DISPENSATIONS.

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"WHEN God appeared to Moses in the burning bush, and commanded him to save and deliver his people Israel from the land of Egypt and from the house of bondage ; Moses, among his other doubts and hesitations, proposed this question to the Lord : 'Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you : and they shall say unto me, What is his name ? what shall I say unto them ?' And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM ; and thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.' This was the name by which God chose to be known—I AM ; the self-existent being ; the Jehovah, the incom-municable name which cannot without horrid blasphemy be applied to any other besides himself. Thereby God made known his unchangeable existence, and constituted himself an object of faith and of request : for 'he that cometh to God must believe that HE IS.' And he taught men by that name, that the Godhead was not an imagination of the fancy, nor a speculation of the intellect, nor a work of the hands of man ; but an outward existence, though invisible ; a living and acting being, whose highest designation was not *how* he is, or *where* he is, or *why* he is ; but, that HE IS ; he is as he is, and as he pleaseth to be.

"In thus taking a name which denoted existence independent of all time, of all place, and of all cause, he made known the foundation of all religion ; which, while it is founded on the reasoning of the mind concerning the divine attributes, is no religion, but only a speculation, an idolatry of that faculty of the mind which employeth itself in the speculation. As the heathen fashioneth an idol of wood or stone, and then falleth down and worshippeth the work of his own hand ; so the intellectual man fashioneth an idea of God, and falleth down and worshippeth the work of his own mind : and the heart of man, in like manner, fashioneth a God (as the Unitarians have done) all benevolence, all mercy, and all sweetness ; and straightway falleth down and worshippeth that work.

"To which different forms of idolatry—the sensual, the intellectual, and the idolatry of the affections—the Lord bringeth an end, by revealing to Moses as the name he would be known by, 'I AM THAT I AM ;' not 'That which you understand or desire me to be ;' but 'That I am, and which I will teach you, if ye will but hear my voice, and believe the word of my testimony.' He is a God revealed to faith ; '*from faith to faith*' as saith St. Paul : not found out by searching, or constituted and created by metaphysical operations of the human mind. Such was the first name of God.

"To this name of Self-existent, (believed existence, not speculative existence,) God added other names taken from his acts ; also revealed to faith : names embodying facts in his government of the world ; not abstract ideas of power and goodness : names, I say, embodying facts ; all such ideas as are contained in the definition of God in our Catechism ; not such ideas as are exhibited at large in 'Clark's Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God ;' that is, a God of infinities, a God of ideas ; which I hold to be no God at all ; nothing more or less than a deification of the human mind.

"The names which God takes are of this kind. "The God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob :" bringing to mind, the history of his dealings with the patriarchs. 'The God which led thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage :' bringing to the memory of faith, the mighty acts done by his servant Moses. 'The Lord of Hosts :' bring to the memory of faith, the battles he had won for his people by Joshua, and Jephtha, and Samson, and David, and all the princes. 'The God of Zion :' bringing to mind the worship which was performed to him in Zion. 'The God that dwelleth between the Cherubim :' bringing to the memory of faith, the most sacred worship of the holy of holies, the ark of the covenant, the mercy seat, the oracles of Urim and Thummim, and whatever else was extraordinary in his government.

"All these names have reference to his actions, and do contain brief records thereof. They are helps to faith, not incitements to speculation ; resting on facts which had an outward existence, and on ideas which have their origin in the mind. And this is the great difference between the God of the Christian, who is the God of Revelation, and the God of Reason ; that the one is the I AM that hath done thus and thus, and hath promised to do thus and thus ; the other is the being whom my mind creates thus and thus, who is thus because I am thus : the God of Revelation, a God of faith ; the god of Reason, the god of the sceptic : the one, the father of the human spirit ; the other, the child of the human spirit : the one, governing the spirit ; the other, governed by the spirit : the worship of the one being true worship of Him who is from everlasting to everlasting ; the worship of the other being self worship.

"These names by which God was commonly known under the old dispensation, partake generally of the narrow and limited character of that dispensation ; because his chief revelations and actions were among a part, and for a part, of the human race. But when the prophets arose, who were the preachers of truth to the Gentiles, they sometimes used a larger and more general style in speaking of God : and among them Isaiah is conspicuous, who hath this remarkable anticipation of brighter times : 'Doubtless thou art our father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not : thou O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer ; thy name is from everlasting.' But it was left till grace and truth came by Jesus Christ ; it was left to that revelation to naturalize the name of God upon the earth—"Our Father." It doth occur at times in the Old Testament, as 'He is the father of the fatherless ;' but even on these particular occasions most rarely. We know not where we remember him (save in Isaiah) set forth, free from all restriction and limitation of every kind, as the father of all families, the common father of the children of men. And the reason is most obvious : because the fulness of time was not yet come for making known the revelation of Him who was to bring the children into peace with the father, and to bring all the prodigals back to their father's house. But when the time was come which was 'set to favour Zion,' then the Son came forth from the bosom of the Father, and published the glad tidings of peace, and made known the revelation of God the Father ; that henceforward all who would come to him by Christ, might call him Father, and expect all the privileges of the sons of God. He came to gather all nations into one, and to redeem them from false idols, to worship God, even the Father : and he appointed his apostles to baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."—REV. E. IRVING.

## THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

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REV. J. H. EVANS, A.M.

JOHN STREET CHAPEL, KING'S ROAD, JULY 26, 1835.

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"All shall know me, from the least to the greatest."—HEBREWS, viii. 11.

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THE Apostle in this chapter is laying before us the infinite superiority of the Gospel dispensation over the legal covenant: and, as in many other particulars, so in this especially—that whereas there was in *that* covenant a perpetual remembrance of sins, the same continued repetition of sacrifices which never could put away sin, there is in the Gospel covenant this special glory, that by one offering our Lord hath “for ever perfected them that are sanctified.” The true Israel of God have to plead before him, not merely the perfection of the Lord’s sacrifice, not merely the perfection of the work of the Mediator, but such a complete and entire acceptance in his person and his work, that from the beginning of the year to the end of it, it is their highest mercy to draw near to a God who blots out their iniquities, and remembers their transgressions no more for ever. And while they sue out continually in their own persons the fresh application of that pardon to *their* hearts, and while there is not a moment of their existence when they may not well look up and say, “Forgive us our sins;” this by no means weakens in the slightest degree the fundamental truth, that the Lord God, in the person of his Son, is for ever pacified, and has completely cancelled their debt, so that it cannot be brought against them either in time or in eternity.

In the words which immediately precede the text the Apostle discourses upon another superiority: “They shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.” In which, as I conceive, he points out these two truths: that there is in the Gospel covenant a far clearer unfolding of the character of God, than ever there was or could be in the legal dispensation; and that it is not now as then, by the instrumentality of men, simply speaking, but that it is by the immediate agency of the Eternal Spirit bringing down his blessings through men, making use of men, but himself the infallible Teacher of his Church and people. “They shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord.” *That* covenant we know failed in bringing effectually the truth to the heart of those before whom they were brought: it is the glory of *our* covenant that it never can fail; it is sure and steadfast in all things: “for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.”

The two great blessings of this covenant are justification and sanctification.

These were unfolded under the old dispensation by the brazen laver and the brazen altar : they were also declared by the water and the blood which came from the side of our Lord. It is also unfolded, as I conceive, by those two standing ordinances in the Church, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. It has its foundation in the very nature of God himself: for as long as man in himself is a guilty, depraved creature, he can never reach the mansions of the blessed as one unpardoned ; and if pardoned, he can never enter into the joys of the blessed but as one made partaker of God's Eternal Spirit, and thus " made meet" to inherit the blessings of God's family.

I have chosen the words I have read for my text for this reason: the Holy Spirit seems to sum up all in the words, *a true knowledge of God*. After the Lord had said, " I will put my laws into their minds, and write them in their hearts ; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people ;" he sums it up all in these words—" All shall know me, from the least to the greatest :" bringing before us this solemn conclusion—that it is not so much a putting the *law* of God into our *hearts*, as putting the *LOVE* of God into our souls ; it is not so much acquaintance with God's law as acquaintance with God himself.

In directing your minds to this subject I would first of all endeavour to unfold what we may understand by the true knowledge of God; secondly, consider the declaration that all the true Israel shall know God, " from the least to the greatest ;" and thirdly, the inestimable blessings which result to them in consequence of it.

In the first place, **WHAT IS INTENDED IN THE TEXT BY THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.** "All shall know me."

It cannot be a mere knowledge of the *existence* of God: for the devils believe that God is ; they tremble as they believe it ; and they hate the God before whom they tremble. It cannot be a mere partial acquaintance with the *character* of God; because we cannot for a moment doubt that the *Jews* were partially acquainted with God's character, and yet our Lord said to them, " Ye neither know me nor my Father :" " If ye had known me ye would have known my Father also ; but now ye neither know me nor my Father." Neither can it be a *dry, uninfluential, notional* knowledge of God, however accurate in its outline that knowledge may be. I think we cannot find a more solemn truth than that contained in 2 Peter, ii. 20, 21: " For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them." This cannot be the knowledge that is here spoken of: to know God includes far more than this. It implies a real, personal, experimental, sanctifying acquaintance with God.

It especially regards him as *a reconciled God in Christ*. What do we understand by " a reconciled God in Christ ?" Is it that his love is turned towards them whom he loved not before ? By no means: we hold no such views ; we altogether deny their accuracy. But when we speak of the reconciliation of God to man, we mean this great truth : the reconciliation of

all his perfections in the way of his mercy ; unfolding this as the basis for our soul's confidence—that he is righteously and holily merciful, pardoning sin at the expense of no other perfection, but in the full and perfect harmony of all his perfections.

Now it is this God who stands especially revealed in the Gospel of his Son—a God for ever pacified in the article of his justice ; a God who considers his law to be for ever magnified and made honourable ; a God who pardons, and pardons freely, who pardons fully, who pardons absolutely, who pardons eternally, who pardons unchangeably : and it is the knowledge of this God which is brought before us in the Gospel of his dear Son.

But more than this : the knowledge of God implies a knowledge of him as *our God in covenant* ; a God who has pledged his very perfections to bring his people safe to glory ; who will not have them to judge him by their feelings, nor by their providences, nor by dark and mysterious transactions ; but who has pledged all that is within himself, all that is in God, all that is divine in his own character, to be the basis of their confidence, and the support of their souls ; “that by two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have consolation.” And in what does the consolation consist but in our resting upon a faithful covenant God, who can by no means deny himself or deceive our souls ?

I always think this part of my subject, whenever I touch upon it, as of unutterable importance : I have no language to express the conviction of my judgment as to its exceedingly momentous nature : because we are all so prone to measure God by our own feelings towards him ; we are all so prone to measure God by his providences, by our own enjoyments—by any thing rather than his promises. But let me remind you that, after all, the true basis is, faith to build upon God’s veracity ; so that when the storm may come, and the tempest howl around you, you may rely on his promise, and bless God for it. In the midst of the darkest dispensations, in the midst of trying providences, in the midst of strong fears, in the midst of strong trials from within and from without, remember God’s promise is faith’s basis ; acknowledging, “Thou hast said it, and thou wilt do it ; for thou art a covenant God, and canst not deny thyself.”

Is there no other knowledge of God ? Where can I lead you ? Whichever way we look at it, it is as a precious stone—turn it as you will it is resplendent. Who can unfold the knowledge of God which springs from the consideration of him as *a pitying Father* ? Who can unfold that knowledge of him that is found amidst the gourds and the worms, and takes up its rest in the pityings of a pitying Father ? Who can unfold the knowledge of what it is to turn away from the unkindness of an unkind world, and from the insufficient kindnesses of God’s people, to take up our repose in the kindnesses of a pitying Father ? Who can unfold what there is in that one verse—“Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitith them that fear him.” “He knoweth our frame,” though our brother doth not, though our friends forget it, though the dearest objects of our hearts’ affections may for a time pass it by : “He knoweth our frame ; he remembereth that we are dust.”

To know God implies a knowledge of him as *a God all-sufficient*. My brethren, how long you and I have been learning this lesson, and how little we know of it after all ! This was the truth that was placed before Abraham, and

God made it his especial comfort on which to stay his soul in the hour of trial. " And when Abraham was ninety years old and nine"—that is, after he had waited long for the promise—" the Lord appeared unto Abraham, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God"—the God all-sufficient : " walk before me, and be thou perfect." How much is there involved in that one verse ! How much of sweet and holy truth is bound up in that one passage ! Blessed Spirit ! enlighten our understandings that we may receive it, and cause us to give it an entire welcome into our affections. It is not Isaac, it is not Joseph, it is not Absaiom : it is not the right hand, nor the right eye : it is not the favourite object of desire : it is not the gourd beneath which we have sat ; but it is God *all-sufficient* who is the support of his people : " I am the Almighty God."

This knowledge of God, then, is brought to the heart, not by human teaching, not by the teaching of my neighbour, but by the teaching of God the Eternal Spirit ; brought near a man's conscience, and laid upon his heart by the infallible Teacher, who teacheth to profit, no one teaching like himself.

Observe, in the second place, here is a positive word of certainty **THAT ALL GOD'S PEOPLE SHALL KNOW HIM**, " from the least to the greatest."

This was no small part of the work of our adorable Immanuel. It is sweet and pleasant to look at him as bearing the very name of the Word of God, because he is the revealer of God. He does indeed tell us the secrets of God's heart ; he brings to light those perfections in Deity which we could never conceive to have existed but for His work. Who could have imagined that there was that in God which the cross has discovered to be in God if there had been no development of that cross ? Who could have imagined that there was that depth of pity, of love, and of commiseration—that height of holiness, that purity of justice in the Divine Being, which has been unfolded, if the cross had not developed it ? Remember, then, it formed no small part of our Lord's work in his atonement, in his sufferings, in his death upon the accursed tree, to bring his people more intimately acquainted with God himself.

As a convincing proof of this, if you turn to the following passages you will see the obvious connexion between the two. Our Lord, in his remarkable prayer, John, xvii. 3, says, " This is life eternal, that they may know thee the true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." Why that close connexion but in unfolding this—that in proportion as we know God, and in proportion as our views of Christ are obscure, our views of God are obscure also. In 2 Corinthians, iv. 6, you have this glorious passage : " God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." The work of Jesus is glorious throughout ; and there is no part of his work which ought more to endear him to our hearts than this to which I am alluding, inasmuch as he disclosed more of the Father, and brings us into more intimate acquaintance with the character of God, than could have been devised by any other means.

But it is not this that secures the infallible teaching of all God's Israel ; it was the covenant " ordered in all things and sure." What our hinderances are in preaching the Gospel none can know but Him whose Gospel it is. *Youth* has its inexperience, its want of wisdom, its high expectation, the untried world

of vanity, and the pride of heart: *middle-life* has its multiplied cares, its distractions, its doing well to be careful, and that too with that facility of deception which Satan knows so well how to place before men's eyes: and there are in *old age* the murmurings, and the repinings, and the dissatisfactions, yea, the over anxieties that perplex and dry up the spirit: *unrighteousness* has its temptations, and *self-righteousness* its equally great temptations. But what is it makes the Word of God effective? What is it which, no matter who preaches, or that he preaches the most unlikely sermon that ever a man preached —what is it which, as he delivers the truth, brings it home with power to the conscience? What is it arrests the man in the very arms of death? What is it brings Lazarus out of his grave, and occasions a glorious resurrection? It is the covenant "ordered in all things and sure:" *this* secures the time when, the place where, and the means by whom; it signifying not how mean the instrument may be.

This was the consolation of our Lord. See in Matthew, xi. how he comforted himself. What awful words had just escaped him! "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sack-cloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you." "At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight." Do you not see how the Lord Jesus Christ stayed his soul upon the strength of that covenant? While he saw the wise, the mighty, and the learned turning their backs upon the Gospel, he took up his rest in this: "Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight."

Let me refer you to another passage of a similar kind. John, vi. 38: Jesus saith unto them, "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not." Now what does our Lord say? "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." I like to take a creed that goes to God's Word, regardless of the explanation of it to human sophistry; taking God's Word at his word; believing what God says, *because* he says it, and leaving Him to defend his own truth who alone can do it. So do we see, that in the darkest moment, when all seemed failure around him, yet our Lord said in the midst of it, "All that the Father giveth to me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast him out." So that there is that in the covenant that seemeth the teaching of the true Israel of God: "And they shall be all taught of God from the least to the greatest." O ye mothers, ye fathers, ye that have your Hobabs around you, those whom you love, ranking themselves, it may be, among the Israel of God, and yet *not* of the Israel of God; if there is a truth that of all others layeth man's pride in the dust, this is it. Is there a truth that of all others is most comforting to the soul? It is this: I speak as a father, and I say, it is this: Rather would I

trust my children in the hands of a God that can do no wrong, than put them in their own hands, or trust them to their own wretched depraved natures; believing, as I do, that man's nature, but for the mighty, overcoming influence of God's Eternal Spirit, would drive us on to destruction. Therefore, beloved, herein lies the answer to the question, What is that that gives security? It is a " covenant ordered in all things and sure."

But there is a point connected with this that I would not overlook; and that is, the way by which the Holy Spirit (for it is his especial work) brings the knowledge of God into the soul. "I will give them a heart that they may know me, saith the Lord." It is not, "I will give them *knowledge*," but "I will give them a *heart*." Now this was communicated in regeneration. This was brought into the soul by the power of the Holy Spirit when God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. But if you ask how it is he carries on that work, I will say, most gradually; taking the far greater majority of instances, most gradually. How dim is the first view the soul takes of God! When the awakening takes place; when the soul begins to arouse from its lethargy; when the page of conscience begins to be turned over; when a man begins to say, "All is not right: I am a prayerless soul—I know it: I hear of repentance—I am an impenitent: I hear of faith—I am an unbeliever: I hear of responsibilities; but I have trampled upon all my mercies;" when that truth breaks in upon the mind, there is light. But yet how small a revelation is there made of God to that soul: little more, perhaps, than his holiness or his justice—those tremendous attributes that make the soul quail before the Infinite. But when he leads the Spirit to Jesus; when he shews him the cross of the Son of God; when he develops the freeness, the fulness, the greatness, and the grace of salvation; when he leads the poor burthened soul to see a free welcome in the Lord Jesus—that sort of welcome that never casts out the sinner, never turns its back upon the poor, burdened, wearied soul; when the freeness of this free grace is developed, and the love that gave the Son becomes clear; when the Father is seen so *holy* that he could not pass by sin without displaying his eternal abhorrence of it, and yet so *gracious* that he spared not his own Son, to open a way through him to his very bosom: when that truth becomes unfolded to the poor burdened soul, what a joy of soul—what a new disclosure of God takes place! "Is this the God that I turned my back against? Is this the God that I neglected? Is this the God to whom I preferred the merest trifle? Is this the God that I lived without prayer to, preferring the approbation of my fellow-worm to the approbation of that God, whose favour is better than life? O the sinfulness of sin! O the grace of God! O the wonders of redeeming love, flowing out from the heart of God by Christ Jesus! O what a beam of light is that which the Holy Spirit brings into the conscience, developing God our Saviour in Christ Jesus!"

My dear hearers, and what is all the after stage of our life? Why is it we are so often sent down the valley of humiliation, and our hearts are ready to say, "What, must I go down again, Lord?" Why is it that, after some gourd which the Lord has given to us, we make of it a *hiding-place*, instead of taking it as a *mercy*? The Lord causes the very gourd to breed its own worm, and it becomes withered before our eyes. And what is all this for? It is but to lead us from the poor dead gourd, and all other gourds; that we may take our rest in God, and find out that truth—God all-sufficient. My dear hearers, happy

they who have learned this lesson in any measure ! Happy they who are willing to learn it, happen what may ! Happy they who are soon to be in the presence of their glorious God, there to see his face, and be with him !

But observe, thirdly, WHAT ARE THE BLESSINGS OF THIS KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

I hardly know where to begin or where to end. It is true wisdom : “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom ; and the knowledge of him is understanding.” O ye men of understanding, ye men of science, and ye men of art ; what if I were to take you to Jerusalem, and lead you to the temple, were it standing ; could I lead you to the holiest of all—could I tell you that the high priest there, with his many sacrifices, knows nothing of the living God—could I take you to Athens, and shew you the altar with the inscription, “ To the unknown god” upon it—take you to the school of the philosophers, and hear them disputing about their foolish niceties, that end in nothing, and tell you there is not a man that knows God among them—what would you say to me ? But I would say to you, that if *you* are unacquainted with sin’s plague, unacquainted with Christ as the only salvation, a stranger to real prayer, to brokenness of heart, to that vital principle I have been endeavouring to display, then thou art at this present moment without God in the world. I ask not, neither do I care, what thine intellect is. Thou mayest write a comment on the Bible for what I know ; thou mayest be a scholar ; thou mayest be sought after : others may worship thee, and thou mayest worship thyself : but this I say to thee, To this present moment thou hast not taken one step towards any real acquaintance with the God of the Bible. The careless sinner does not know God ; the foolish sinner does not know God ; the self-righteous professor does not know God ; the ungodly professor does not know God ; the mere man of creed does not know God. Who knows him ? The poor, the weary, the heavy laden. They who know Christ, know God : and though the light they have be but as the opening of the dawn, it is that light that all the powers of darkness never shall be able to obscure and destroy.

Here lies true understanding ; here also the secret of peace : “ They that know thy name will put their trust in thee.” Whence is it that that care-worn brow marks thy countenance ? A Christian man ought never to have a care-worn brow. If thou wert only conversant with that great secret, “ Casting thy care upon him that careth for thee,” thou wouldest find out the blessed and wondrous lesson, of living above the region of disappointment, and finding peace and quietness in believing : “ Acquaint thyself with him, and be at peace.”

In a word, this true knowledge of God has in it the material of all holiness. Whatever there is of love, whatever there is of hope, whatever there is of obedience, whatever there is of careful walking, whatever there is of watchfulness unto prayer, whatever there is of making a conscience of one’s deeds, whatever there is of walking secretly with God as in the sight of God—it is all involved in this one truth, a true, real, personal, experimental knowledge of God in Christ. And the more you come to him as the one good, the more you will live above the world, its poor, dying vanities, and its poor, momentary cares ; casting your burden upon Him who can, and who will, sustain you.

The greater part of our lives is unknown to the world. If your outward conduct is that which the world can take no knowledge of, to find fault with it,

bless God for it : it was more than David could say. If you are able to walk straight with God before your fellow-men, give God the glory. But the greater part of the life of a child of God is unknown and a secret to others. What is the grand secret for watchfulness ? What is the grand secret for conscientiousness ? What is the grand secret for a holy walking ? " Thou God seest me." Is there a higher ? Yea, an inconceivably higher : " Thou God lovest me." " My Father, my God !

" Too wise to err, too good to be unkind ;"

I lay my wearied head on thy bosom, and commit the future to thy blessed self." O ye men of professions : if this were your principle, we should not hear of the knaveries there are in professions. Ye men of trade and business, if this were your principle, we should not hear of the low tricks by which the ignorant are entrapped by the cunning and crafty : we should not be pointed sometimes to this individual, a stranger to the grace of God, and say, " How well he behaved, compared with that man that talks and prattles about the Gospel, and about the doctrines of the Gospel." The greater part of a man is unknown to the world ; and nothing but the knowledge of God, and the love of God, experienced in the heart, and the sweet realization of our interest in him, will keep us fast amidst the world's crookedness.

*Be thankful, then, for the least measure you have of the true knowledge of God.* If there be any here who have not one atom of right view of God's mercy, grace, tenderness, compassion, readiness to forgive, there being but the beam in their hearts that brings them to the dust ; my dear brethren, there are thousands of parents that at this present time would say, " O could I see that dear child—O that I could but see that dear son, O that I could but see that daughter brought to the dust." Therefore, though it is not joyous but grievous, yet hast thou reason to bless God for what thou dost know of him, that he has brought thee to the dust, though at this present moment thou art without hope in thyself. Thank God for the least measure of acquaintance with him.

*Covet earnestly the most.* The true secret for a heavenly walking with God, is a real acquaintance with him. There is nothing in the Gospel that at all fosters the spirit of an unholy familiarity. I would desire both to pray and to talk as if we were standing before the judgment-seat ; for no other views of God can be right ; no other views of God can be accurate. But as one standing in the person of his Son accepted, but before a God so great, so glorious, that one feels one's self to be nothing before him ; with all this there may be combined holy familiarity and the confidence of a child, and a tender reliance upon that goodness that never can fail. And let me say as the conviction of my soul, that I find those of God's children receive the most who expect the most from God. I find that they seem most to live as children ought to live who walk in the holy familiarity of accepted children, accepted in the Beloved.

*Do not quarrel with the way by which God makes himself known to thee.* I remember the expression of a child of God, who, feeling her heart too much attached to some earthly object, prayed that God would take away the idol, whatever the idol might be. In the course of a week he took away her husband. There is that in us which sometimes shrinks on that very point : and when we

ask God to make us like his Son, and when we implore him that he would give us an earnest desire of himself as the chief good, we are sometimes afraid lest his knife should be too sharp in its incisions, and his lancet too deep in our heart's blood. Trust the Lord. What! can ye not trust Him who laid your sins upon the head of his Son? "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up freely for you, will he not with him freely give you all things?"

I would say, *Live much in the prospect of soon knowing him as he is.* While the state of those who know not God is unspeakably awful, the prospect of those who know God is unspeakably glorious. O happy they who, after receiving some precious knowledge of him in the person of his Son, are looking forward, and living for the blessed period, when they shall know as they are known, and be for ever with the Lord! The Lord grant his blessing and pardon for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

## THE DEATH OF THE RIGHTEOUS AND OF THE WICKED

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REV. J. LEIFCHILD,

CRAVEN CHAPEL, REGENT STREET, AUGUST 2, 1835.

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"The wicked is driven away in his wickedness: but the righteous hath hope in his death."  
PROVERBS, xiv. 32.

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THE claims of the writings of Solomon to inspiration, notwithstanding the sad downfali of his character, are innumerable. That he was renowned above all the princes of the earth for wisdom is an historical fact; and one of which those of his writings that have come down to us afford the strongest confirmation. That wisdom, however, other sacred writers assure us, was the result of the divine illumination: and it was while under that illumination, and during his best days, when he conversed with the holy God, that he wrote the book of Proverbs. The inspiration of *this* book, at least, cannot be questioned; it is rendered indubitable from the sanction given to it, from the quotations made from it by our Lord and his apostles in the New Testament. Solomon has said in one part of this book: "Put not forth thyself in the presence of the king, and stand not in the place of great men: for better it is that it be said unto thee, Come up hither; than that thou shouldest be put lower:" which words our Lord quoted as a divine maxim, when he charged his disciples ifidden to a feast to take the lowest place. Again, Solomon has said in this book, "Feed thine enemy if he hunger, and if he thirst give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head:" in allusion, perhaps, to the custom of those who softened and melted the most stubborn metals, by heaping upon them coals of fire. Those words the Apostle quotes, in his epistle to the Romans, as a divine commandment, enforcing forgiveness and charity upon the part of the followers of Jesus. Not to multiply any more instances, the Apostle James quotes *verbatim* the words of Solomon in this book, when he says, "God resisteth the proud; but giveth grace to the humble." The wisdom, therefore, of this book is the wisdom of the Holy God, to whom no time nor circumstances are opposed, and whose decisions are infallible.

The passage I have read, as a general maxim, is evidently one of this kind: "The wicked is driven away in his wickedness: but the righteous hath hope in his death." Let us describe the characters here mentioned; and consider what is said respecting each. And it will be necessary to describe only one of these classes of characters, in order to bring them both before you; since they who are not of the one, inevitably belong to the other. All who are not among the righteous are infallibly among the wicked. Into these two lots or

portions of mankind all the human race are distributed. At the last day there will be no third party; the righteous and the wicked will comprehend the whole of mankind: so that in describing the one, by implication we represent the other.

There is, perhaps, no word in the Old Testament of more frequent and important use than the term " *RIGHTEOUS*." " Rejoice in the Lord ye *righteous* " " The Lord loveth the *righteous* :" " The *righteous* shall flourish like the palm-tree :" " The *righteous* shall hold on his way :" and so on. Now it is of the greatest importance to ascertain the exact meaning of that term; since if we attach too general and loose a sense to it, we may be misapplying promises and representations to ourselves, never meant for us, and keep the world under a delusion. On the other hand, if we attach too rigorous and overstraining a sense to the term, we may be debarring ourselves of the consolation intended for us, and in this respect render the Scripture of none effect. It must be very obvious to you, that the meaning of the term must be ascertained according to the general tenor of the Scriptures, since the Holy Spirit can never be at variance with itself. I mean to say, that in attempting to explain the meaning of the truth of the Old Testament, we ought to avail ourselves of all the helps afforded in the New.

Righteous, in the sense of being strictly just, upright, and holy, we are none of us by nature. In that wide and ample survey which the Almighty is represented in the Scriptures as taking of mankind, for the purpose of ascertaining their character—a survey which regarded not only their outward form of conduct, but their inward principles, motives, and springs of action—it is declared as the result, that he found " none righteous, no not one :" " They are altogether gone out of the way ; they are become filthy ; there is none righteous, no not one." And the world remains unaltered in this respect ; none by nature are righteous. No man comes into this world pure and holy : no one enters into the world but with a depraved nature ; at least a nature alienated from God, destitute of a bias to holiness, and possessed of a tendency and bias to sin ; and therefore invariably going wrong ; following the multitude to do evil, corrupt from the earliest dawn. So that when the Scriptures speak of " *righteous*" persons, they must mean those who have been made so, who have become so after their birth, and by a subsequent process. This is clear. If it states on the one hand that none are righteous *by nature*, and if it speaks on the other hand of some persons *being* righteous, that must refer to those who have been made so, who have become so by a process subsequent to their entrance into the world.

Now this process implies two things, at least : the *absolution* of guilt, and the *purification* of our nature.

First, *the absolution of our guilt*. We must begin with this ; for till this is the case, it is in vain we think of having our nature purified or made holy. If you could imagine the improbable thing, that the Holy Spirit should be given to us to renew us, and make us holy, without our past guilt having been cancelled, it would be entirely in vain for our salvation. An ancient deity is not cancelled by our ceasing to incur fresh obligations :

" Although my life should hence be thine,  
Present for past can ne'er atone;

Though I to thee the whole resign,  
I only give thee back thine own.

What have I, then, wherein to trust ?  
I nothing have, I nothing am ;  
Excluded is my every boast,  
My glory swallow'd up in shame."

**Aye**, though you should be made now as holy and as innocent as Adam ~~was~~ before his fall, yet past guilt would hang like a clog upon you, and roll over your head like a burden too heavy for you to bear. Then how is it to be dissolved? how is it to be cancelled? How am I to get rid of the guilt of my innumerable sins during a course of years? How shall man be just with God? Heaven knows but of one way: there is but one way, and that is revealed in this book: it is by an interest in the death and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, through faith in his name. It is not enough that Christ hath died: it is not enough that he obeyed the law, and wrought out a perfect righteousness, as the ground of the justification of sinners: that is not enough for our salvation; because you are told, that thousands of persons upon thousands will be everlasting lost, notwithstanding Christ has died, and wrought out a perfect righteousness. And why? Because they do not come to him: they are not united to him; they are not interested by faith in his sacrifice and righteousness. The efficacy of his work is to be drawn from him and applied to ourselves, only by the touch of faith; and that faith is the gift of God, the work of his Spirit in the heart. He who has not this, who lives and dies without this, is as certain of being lost, as though Christ had never come into the world, nor spilled a drop of his most precious blood. So that the salvation that is in Christ is nothing to you, nothing at all to you, who are neglecting him, and continuing strangers to the power of faith in his mediation. Therefore it is a question of the utmost importance to be addressed to the conscience of every man and woman hearing the Gospel—and I do now address it to the conscience of every one now here: "Dost thou believe on the Son of God? Art thou ignorant of his righteousness?"

But, secondly, there must not only be the abolition of guilt, but the *purification of our nature*: and that, indeed, is the invariable effect that follows this absolution. Whenever the Holy Spirit works faith in the mind of a human being, to attach him to Christ, he always sets a mark upon that being, as one of the persons destined to receive his sanctifying operations. Those operations are not like the operations of human means, that sometimes fail of their end by the interposition of an unforeseen difficulty or insuperable obstacle. The Spirit of God never fails to accomplish the end he has in view, in the renovation of that man's nature and character whom he has brought to Christ. He can meet with nothing in any one's nature, character, or case, insurmountable to him. He can no more be foiled in securing the end of this creation than in securing the end of the first creation: for we are told that believers in Christ are "*created unto good works*." We are as much disposed, and fitted, and inclined by inward principles, to the practice of good works and holiness, as the things in creation to the end for which they were created; as the sun, for instance, to shine, or the waters to flow, or the planets to roll. They are "*created anew in Christ Jesus*;" by nice and imperceptible touches the image of God is formed within them, consisting in righteousness and true

holiness. Righteousness becomes the predominant quality of their character. they love righteousness, and they hate iniquity.

In the customary language of mankind, things are always denominated by their prevailing character. You speak of a *wise* man: you do not speak of a man who has no ignorance on any subject; but you speak of a man whose knowledge is greater than his ignorance. You speak of a *healthy* man: you do not speak of a man who is never afflicted with disease and infirmity; but you speak of a man whose predominant quality is one of a healthy character. And so when the Scriptures speak of a *holy*, a *righteous* person, they speak of one in whom righteousness prevails: it is the predominant quality.

Then this righteousness of the people of God is *universal*. They are *filled* with the whole law of God: they delight in the law after the inner man. For the same reason that they value one part, and wish to keep it, they value the whole; because the same authority that enjoined the one duty, enjoined all the rest. It is very possible for a real Christian to be surpassed by an unconverted man by a few specious and shewy virtues; such as keeping his word, as being a man of remarkable punctuality, and of great generosity. And the reason is obvious: these few shewy virtues are all that the unconverted man attends to: he neglects all the rest, and he piques himself upon these: they are his title to glory; they are his reputation; they are the foundation of all his hopes: and hence he takes particular care to shine in these. But the principle of a good man's obedience is larger in its scope, and wider in its range: he cannot afford to expend his energy upon two or three particular virtues, but he goes round the whole of the divine precepts, and says, "O how I love thy law! Then shall I not be ashamed when I have respect unto all thy commands."

And this righteousness in the people of God is not only of a persevering, but of an increasing nature. It grows; it has its alternations and its increase, like every thing that possesses life.

I think you may see, then, who are the righteous as described in the Scriptures; I think you may understand from these few brief remarks what the Scriptures mean by the term "*righteous*." It means all persons who have been absolved by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ more or less clearly revealed to them; and all who have been renewed by the Holy Ghost. All persons who have been saved from the beginning of the world, all persons who may be saved down to the end of time, are saved in just the same way, by faith in the merits of Christ as revealed to them, and by the grace of the Holy Spirit. The song of the first-born of Adam that was saved and of the last-born of Adam that will be saved, will be in substance the same—a song of praise to God for his mercy and grace through the Lord Jesus Christ. The redeemed out of all ages and countries to God, will sing one and the same song before the eternal throne.

All these are the righteous; all besides are the wicked. I grant you that among *these* there may be some who, compared with the rest of the wicked, are very excellent persons. They have many excellent dispositions; many amiable features of character; and we cannot for a moment suppose that they will be involved in the same degree of punishment with the rest of their class. But neither, on the other hand, do we place them among the righteous, or claim for them an inheritance in the kingdom of God.

Having thus enabled you to understand these two different classes of character, let us, in the second place, consider **WHAT IS SAID OF EACH OF THEM.** “The wicked is driven away in his wickedness: but the righteous hath hope in his death.”

You are conducted, you see, at once, from the character of the righteous man to the close of his life; which is specified to be “in hope.” And this supposes that he will *persevere* in the way of righteousness and holiness. The perseverance of the saints, indeed, is a doctrine objected to by some, simply, perhaps, because it has not been properly stated to them. When we speak of the perseverance of the saints, we do not mean that they may never be permitted to turn aside, or that if any turn aside from the way of righteousness, and die in that state, they will be taken to glory merely because they once professed Christianity. No; we grant that the righteous may be permitted to fall foully; but we contend that they shall not be allowed to die in that state. They shall be chastened by Providence, and brought to repentance, and recovered to the way of righteousness. All the characteristics of the work of the Holy Spirit shall not be obliterated; the mighty pains taken to effect their conversion shall not come to nought; and the promises made to them in their better days shall not fall to the ground. We should require some stronger testimony of Scripture than has ever been brought, to convince us to the contrary. We think that the examples of Holy Writ go to support this sentiment; especially those of David and of Peter—of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: and we are certain that a vast number of promises and declarations yield the doctrine their support. “The righteous shall *hold on* his way.” “The path of the just shall be as the shining light which shineth *more and more* unto the *perfect* day.” “The Lord will *perfect* that which concerneth me, he will not forsake the work of his hands.” “If his children forsake my law, then will I visit their transgressions with stripes; nevertheless my loving-kindness will I not take *away*, nor suffer my truth to fail, nor alter the word that is gone out of my mouth.” “I give unto my sheep eternal life.” “Being confident of this very thing; that he who hath begun a good work in me will carry it on to the day of Jesus Christ.” “What shall separate us from the love of Christ?” “Whom he justifieth them he also glorifieth.” Why, with so many explicit testimonies of Scripture on this subject, does any one wish to dictate a contrary sentiment, reflecting so little on the divine purposes, and affording so little relief to the desponding heart?

Go with me to the death-bed of the righteous man. He recollects, but with grief and shame, many instances of his departure from God since the period of his conversion. He recalls to mind his innumerable defections, and instances in which he has come short, not merely of the divine requisitions, but of his own intentions, and purposes, and declared aim. He can take no comfort now from any thing he has done in religion, excepting as it affords an evidence of a principle in him super-human, and of his conversion to God. And that conversion he is not permitted to doubt: there is an evidence belonging to conversion which will not fail the individual: “He that believeth hath the witness in him-self.” But his title to everlasting glory he derives from nothing that himself has done: he looks upon his sanctification now as a proof of the blessing of heaven; not merely as fitness and preparation for their enjoyments. “The cross,” he says,

" The cross of Christ has purchased all  
 To man the bleeding cross has promised all,  
 To man the bleeding cross has sworn eternal grace.  
 Who gave his life, what else can he withhold ?"

Such views as these have supported the righteous on the bed of death ; even when it has been a bed of flames, a bed of torture, as in the case of the martyrs. How often have you read their dying exclamation—" None but Christ; none but Christ !" who washed their robes, and made them white—not in their own blood, but in the blood of the Lamb. Did I say "*support* the righteous on the bed of death ?" They have often given them peace and comfort. How frequently, when standing by the bed-side of the true Christian, wiping the cold dew upon his brow, and moistening the parched lip, and smoothing the troubled bed, have you found it to be your greatest difficulty to reconcile him to his stay here ; so impatient was he to be gone. It seemed as if the tie that bound him to earth had been snapped ; as if the silken cord which seemed to hold him back, which had so much influence on his happiness, was all dissolved ; and as if he had come within the sphere of some powerful attraction to which he was delighted to yield up himself. O, it is at the lowest ebb that the Christian will realize the supporting consolation of the righteous, "The righteous hath hope in his death." Scarcely any one of them ever sinks below that. At the very least, the righteous man may expect to be supported by his hope when he comes to die : but often it is more than hope ; it is comfort, it is transport, it is spiritual rapture. How impatient have the righteous been to quit the world ; and sometimes when they have fallen into sleep, and thought it death, how have they been pained to wake and find themselves still on this side Jordan ! They seem like some tempest-beaten mariner, who had come within view of the shores of the desired haven. O how does he long for the last wave that shall terminate his efforts, and land him safely, instead of being driven back again, to see the shore again receding from his view !

" Never weather-beaten sailor  
 More fully bent for shore;  
 Never weary pilgrim's limbs  
 Seeking for slumber more;  
 Than his tir'd spirit longs to fly  
 To his Redeemer's breast :  
 ' O, come quickly, dearest Lord !  
 And take me home to rest.' "

It is our duty to contemplate the result of the other course ; the case of all who are not among the righteous. " The wicked is driven away in his wickedness." This is very full and pregnant with meaning. It may allude to the awful progression which there is in vice. The wicked is hurried on by wickedness, or in wickedness. The first step in the course of vice is a precipitating step : it leads to another and another ; no one can tell to what it will lead, or where it will issue. When our inward depravity gains a passage outward, it is difficult to check it afterwards, or make it contented with that one passage. How many thousands have deceived themselves by saying, " Thus far will I go in iniquity, and no further." Alas, when they have gone so far, they find themselves too much under the influence of temptations and sinful habits to recede :

and they went on step by step, until at length deeds which they would have shuddered at at a former period, become familiarized to their minds. "Behold," says the prophet, "our iniquities like mountains have carried us away." "The wicked is driven away in his wickedness." Take care, therefore, how you enter on a course of sin. Take care, you that are young, how you first commence the neglect of God, and association with persons of an ungodly character. All the time the righteous are going "from strength to strength," and becoming prepared for everlasting glory, you must be proceeding from one degree of wickedness to another, until "your steps shall take hold of hell," and you totter on the brink of the tremendous abyss.

There is sometimes an abrupt termination to the life of the wicked man. "The wicked is driven away in his wickedness," hurried prematurely out of life. Sin is an enemy to the body as well as to the mind. It introduces rotteness into the bones, and at the same time furnishes the conscience with the materials of dreadful accusation. How many are the victims of intemperance and of debauchery! Where one dies from want, a thousand die from excess. They looked upon the wine when it was red, and they said, "Let us eat, and drink, and be merry; and to-morrow shall be as to-day, and much more abundant." But they soon find, in the premature diseases with which they become afflicted, and in their early infirmities of body, that they have sown to themselves the wind, and now are reaping the whirlwind. "The wicked do not live out half their days:" they are sometimes driven off from the stage of life. Their life while in the loom is not woven out, but violently cut off. They wither and decay, and hang not half their time upon the tree of life. What has hurried that individual to the fatal tree? What has placed that other in the pestilential cell? What has caused the exile and banishment of the third to an unknown land? And why has another inflicted upon himself an untimely death? These are events in their history that you would at a former period have thought impossible; had it been told you at their early life that they would come to such an end, you could not have supposed it. But they broke from parental restraint; they neglected the duty of prayer; they profaned the Sabbath of the Lord; they cast his word behind their back; and their iniquities, like the wind, have taken them away. "The wicked is driven away in his wickedness."

The opposition of this clause of the text seems to me to give out the idea of the state of his mind at the close of life. "The righteous hath hope in his death :" but "the wicked is driven away in his wickedness." That is, he dies without hope; he has no hope in his death. In all his former sicknesses he had a hope that he should recover; and that if he recovered he should repent and be reformed. But that has so often come to nought that he cannot entertain it any longer. He feels the sentence of death in himself; and all his hopes of recovery, and especially of amendment, have given up the ghost: he has no hope. He knows that there is a future state: he cannot doubt, whatever he says, of immortality. Else why that startling fear of what is to come? It were but to give the lie to his own heart, to say there were no future state. He feels himself totally unprepared: he is on the march to the eternal world; he is going to enter upon an eternal existence, and he is totally unprepared for that state. Perhaps the dreadful truth occurs to him, but for the first time in his life, that that righteousness of his own, which consisted

merely in the absence of some common blemishes, and the performance of a few hollow and superficial virtues; that that righteousness, which he hoped would be a foundation to lean upon, is altogether defective and worthless, and will not stand before God: and he has no hope, and has no interest in the righteousness of another; and while he feels the king of terrors approaching to him nearer and more near; and while he feels his sinking pulse betraying to him the awful truth that he is about to die—who shall describe the inward perturbation of his soul? He dies; but it is against his will: he dies; but it is clinging to the world. He does not fall from the tree of life like the ripe fruit, by the gentlest pressure; but he is prematurely torn from it by the hand of violence, and perishes in the storm: “The wicked is driven away in his wickedness.”

Now there is a great variety in the manner in which the wicked die. The Apostle Paul sums up all the pious of every age into one view, and dismisses them with this singular expression: “They all died in *faith*.” But of the wicked there are many who, having neglected the concerns of religion during life, soothe themselves at the hour of death, with the flattering hope that all will be well: I might write over these, “They all died in *delusion*.” There are others who trust to their faith without works, or to their works without faith; and because they have had some notion, and some slight experience, or because they have not been so bad as others, they think they shall find acceptance with God: over these I might write, “They all died in *error*.” There are not a few whose consciences witness against them in the midst of the last agonies; and on this side eternity begins the work of vengeance. They recollect their sins, and anticipate their doom. I dare not venture to represent to you what I myself have seen and heard; but I may say of them all, “They died in *despair*.” The question is, How is it probable *you* will die? and what is of greater consequence, What will probably be your experience the moment after death? Do not think that these questions cannot admit of an answer; you may each of you, answer them for yourselves. As is your way now, such is likely to be your end: your condition in the present world, whatever it may be, is the result of a divine, and as I may so say, an arbitrary appointment, the sovereign appointment of God: he has chosen your state and fixed you in it, as the result of the eternal purpose, without having respect to any thing between, and anything before; and it is the result of his sovereign purpose, your condition at present. But that will not be the case in your future condition. No; *that* will be inevitably regulated by your *present* character. God has bound himself to observe a correspondence here: “Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he reap.” There will be the same correspondence between our present character, and our future and everlasting condition as there is between the seed sown, and the produce resulting: “Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap: he that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.” Momentous truth! Truth that ought to be written upon every heart; truth that ought to be before every mind every day. Every day you are by your conduct, your principles, giving a complexion to your everlasting destinies.

And think not your everlasting destiny is at a distance. It is that imaginary distance that diminishes the object. But pass a few swiftly fleeting years, and we shall all be inhabitants of that eternal state. There is not one human

being here, but in a few years the whole of us shall have passed away, and we shall every one be in eternity, and our doom will be fixed. But why do I talk of years? Do we not hear the voice sufficiently frequent from the tomb, telling us, that in the midst of life we are in death? But how know I but with regard to some of you, those of you who perhaps least of all expect it, the decree has gone forth, and but a few weeks or months shall elapse, before *you* are also in eternity, and your everlasting condition fixed beyond the power of alteration?

Then what is your present character? O go with me in imagination for one moment, to that tribunal before which you shall shortly appear, and hear that voice in imagination now which soon shall speak to you in the solemn accents of eternity! What was your character? what your principles? Did you believe on the Son of God? Did you seek the righteousness of the Holy Spirit wrought in your nature? Or did you live and die an unconverted soul? O when I think of the hope of the righteous man that God has planted in his breast; when I think of the solidity of its foundation, the strength of its support, and the certainty of the attainment of its object; when I think that the great God would sooner forfeit his throne, than suffer the hope of the converted man to be frustrated; can I attach too much value to that hope? I will take every thing belonging to his condition for the sake of his hope. Though he should be despised by the world; though he should be afflicted by Providence; though he should have to struggle with rebellious lusts; though he should be sick, poor, abject, dying; give me his hope, and I will take the whole.

And can this hope be obtained? Can it be secured? It may be secured by *you*, if this very night you will render your heart to God, and seek him with your whole soul. Which of you does not say, "Let me die the death of the righteous?" But live his life, and begin now. Woe to you if you falter here. You may be taken away by a stroke; you may be cut down by some dreadful accident: you may be driven away with the hand of violence. A fire may consume your dwelling and your flesh: you may be hurried into eternity when you think not of it. O listen to the fervent voice that now addresses you from the sacred oracles; listen to it as from the tomb of our departed friends: "Prepare to meet thy God." And being reconciled to God, and living a life of faith and devotedness to God, triumph in their immortality: I am an immortal being; I am destined to immortality. My body is the pitcher of Gideon; but when that is broken by death, my soul is the torch that will blaze out in all its lustre. My body is a temple of the vestal virgins whose fire is always burning: but the image of God stamped on my soul shall secure its preservation by the angel of God. Is God the God of the living, and are there only dead souls? Is heaven the land of immortality, and is it not to be replenished by immortal beings? I feel that I may live in the immortal world. I grasp the immortal world: I stretch my hands to the immortal world: I see the Redeemer, who reigns over the immortal world. O let me hear him say to me, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. To him that overcometh will I give to sit down with me upon my throne, even as I have overcome, and am set down with my Father upon his throne." Words like these, my brethren, shall make the miseries of life supportable, and the prospects of death sweet and delightful.

## THE CHARACTER OF DAVID.

'THAT such a warm and sublime spirit, so terribly tried, should have given way before the tide of its affections, I wonder not: I rather wonder, that tried by such extremity, such a strong and sublime spirit should not have burst control, and enacted right forward the conqueror, the avenger, and the destroyer. But God, who anointed him from his childhood, had given him store of inspired graces, and preserved him from sinking under the long delay of his promised crown; and kept him from contracting the sulky moods and dispositions of a hunted and persecuted man. Adversity did but bring out the sublimity of his character, which else might have slumbered.

"But to conceive aright of the gracefulness of David's character, you must draw him into comparison with men similarly conditioned; and then you shall see how vain the world is to compare with him. (I reason as a man, and to men). Conceive a man who had saved his country—the champion of his country—and clothed himself with gracefulness and renown in the sight of all the people; who had by the chivalry of his deeds, won for himself intermarriage with the royal line; who by unction of the Lord's prophet, had been set apart to the throne itself: conceive such an one driven out from house and home, through tedious years deserted of every stay but heaven, with no soothing sympathies of quiet life, harassed for ever between famine and the edge of the sword, and keeping in savage-holds and desert places. Tell me now, in the annals of men, of one so bereaved, so straitened, so hampered, maintaining, not fortitude alone, but sweet composure and heavenly frames of mind; inditing praise to no avenging deity, couching no songs according with his savage and unsocial way of life; but inditing praise to the God of mercy, and songs which soar into the third heaven of vision: not indeed without tender touches of sorrow and complaint for his sorrowful estate—not without prophetic and awful warnings to his blood-thirsty foe, but ever culling in sweet preludes of good to come, an expression of present contentment. Find me a man so exiled, so driven out, and so behaving himself in the annals of man; and I yield the argument of this controversy. Men there have been, driven to wander outlaws and exiles, whose musings and whose actions have been recorded in the minstrelsy of our native land. Draw them into comparison with the Psalms of David, and know the spirit they ignorantly blaspheme: contrast the deep desperation of the one with the rooted trust of the other. Shew me an outlaw who had never spoiled the country which had forsaken him, nor turned his hand in self-defence or revenge against his persecutors; but used the vigour of his arm against the enemies of the country which had forsaken him; yea, lifted up his arm in defence of a mother who had cast off her noblest son, girt with salvation, and who had raised the rest of her family to hunt him down and cut him off. Find me such a repudiated son lifting up his arm and smiting and desolating her enemies, whose spoil he had taken to his cost, not to enrich himself, but to comfort her and her children. Find me among the Coriolani, and the Cromwells, and the Napoleons of the earth, such a man; and I will yield the argument of this controversy, which I maintain for the fearless son of Jesse. But I fear not that such another man is to be found in the recorded annals of men. Though he arose from the peasantry to fill the throne, and to

enlarge the borders of his land, he gave himself neither to ambition nor to knowledge : more basely treated than the sons of men, he gave not place to despondency: though the highest genius in poetry, he gave it not licence to sing his own deeds, nor to ennable any worldly sentiment of the human breast, however virtuous and honourable: but constrained his poetry to sing the praises of God, and the victories of the right hand of the Lord of hosts, and the bounty of his hands, which breed admiration and wonder. And hath he not dressed out religion in such a rich and beautiful garment of divine poesy as well be-seemeth her majesty ? In which, religion being arrayed, she can stand up before the eyes even of her enemies, in more loyal state and more beautiful vestments, than any personification of love, or glory, or pleasure, to which highly gifted mortal spirits have addressed themselves.

“ But the form of his character was vast ; the scope of his life was immense, His harp was oft strained, and every angel of joy and sorrow swept the cords as he passed ; but the music always breathed of heaven. Such oceans of affection lay within his breast as could not always slumber in the breast of a hundred men, yet here struggled together in the narrow continent of one single heart. And the scornful men of this world, whose life is one offence, whose heart is hard, without any streams of affection, without any noble thoughts, the scornful Pharisees have no sympathy for one so conditioned, because he ruled not with constant quietness the unruly host of adverse natures which dwelt within one soul.

“ Of want of self-command you will not accuse the man, who endured Saul’s javelin to be so oft launched at him, while the people were without ready to hail him king : that was self-command—was it not ? Of want of self-command you will not accuse him, who endured all bodily hardships and taunts of his enemies, and endured against the power of revenge, and ruled his desperate band of outlaws like a company of saints ? But that he should not have been able to enact all characters without a fault,—the simple shepherd, and conquering hero, and romantic lover, and perfect friend, and innocent outlaw ; and the lofty poet, and royal monarch, and the holy prophet, and regenerator of the church, and withal the man of vast soul who played not his part like a stager, by turns, but was the original of them all ;—I say, that he should have fulfilled this high priesthood of humanity without an error, were more than human.

“ I am not here to defend any of his wicked acts ; which he himself hath more keenly scrutinized, declaimed against, and more bitterly lamented, than all his censurers. When of these acts he became convinced, if he be found less true to God and to righteousness, if he be found less disposed to repentance and sorrow and anguish, if he be found less exculpatory of himself, stout-hearted in his courses, or a formalist in his penances, or any way less worthy of a spiritual man in these than in the other of his infinite moods,—then strike him from the canon, let his psalms become monkish teachings, or records of the Inquisition, or any thing else you please. But if these penitential psalms uncover the soul’s deepest hell of agony, and lay bare the iron limbs of misery, whereby the very heart dissolveth ; and express the same in words which melt the soul, and bow the head even to conceive them : then I say, let us keep these records of the Psalmist’s grief and despondency, as the most precious of his utterances ; inasmuch as they are sure to be needed in the case of every man who assayeth to live a spiritual life.”—REV. EDWARD IRVING

## THE SON OF MAN THE SAVIOUR OF THE LOST.

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REV. W. H. COOPER,

HOXTON ACADEMY CHAPEL, AUGUST 9, 1835.

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"For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost. How think ye? If a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish."—MATTHEW, xviii. 11—14.

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WE lose much of the beauty of the sacred writings when we do not view them as parts of the passages with which they stand in immediate connexion. For there is not only a beauty and importance in every sentence of the Word of God, but every sentence of the Scriptures, almost, gathers additional beauty and importance from the connexion in which it is to be found. If Scripture be the best interpreter of Scripture; if we find assistance in our attempts at interpreting the Word of God by comparing parallel passages with each other, we shall find important, and often equal assistance, in our endeavours to understand the contents of this inspired volume, by attending to the connexion in which these passages occur. For the connexion in which such things are introduced often serves at once to explain every difficulty, and to interpret matter that may be necessary for the elucidation of that particular passage.

This is the case, for example, with the entire connexion of the words of the text. If we were to pursue it from its commencement, from the time when our Lord took the little child and placed him in the midst of his disciples, and from the remarks which he made immediately upon that occurrence, we should find that one remark follows, and that one remark interprets another, in a beautiful and interesting manner.

But we more particularly wish to confine your attention to the words which we have read to you, connected with each other, as forming a subject for this morning's discourse. The doctrine maintained throughout the verses that have been read to you is one that is often met with objection, by some even of God's people; we apprehend in consequence of that naked, unscriptural form in which it is often presented to their minds, separated from those other truths of the Word of God, in company with which it is continually introduced in Scripture. It is often proposed as a bare subject of controversy, being placed by itself for consideration, instead of being viewed connected with those other doctrines that always lead to it, and tend to interpret its difficulties.

We apprehend, that maintaining the connexion in which the words of the text stand, we shall see that they harmonize with the general system of redemption, and that other truths of the Word of God necessarily lead us to

this result. Each of the verses that we have read to you is important and interesting in itself: each of them has been frequently made the subject of separate consideration. Take them as a whole, and we may learn from their combined beauties, and their combined testimony, the nature of that work to which they bear so full and so decided a testimony.

In examining these words we find in them a proof and a statement of the Saviour's work and errand; a figurative illustration of the nature and results of that work and errand; and, finally, the assertion of the great principle of the divine conduct that was herein developed. May the Holy Spirit accompany the attempt we now make, to comment upon this passage of the Word of God, with his abundant and effectual blessing.

We have, then, in these words, in the first place, A PROOF AND STATEMENT OF THE SAVIOUR'S WORK AND ERRAND.

This is expressed in one of those short but comprehensive passages, that frequently occur in the New Testament Scriptures, and which seem designed to sum up the contents of the Gospel in some short but well remembered form of words, that the most treacherous recollection may be able to grasp and to retain: "The Son of man is come to save that which was lost." You at once remember, that the same assertion is made in a variety of passages of Scripture, which strike at once upon your minds, as being parallel to the words of this part of our text. As, for example, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the chief." And yet all these assertions relate to the same subject, and express it nearly in the same words, and in some short compass. If you examine them you will find an interesting variety in each. You will find that the same truth, expressed in nearly the same words, is presented in such variety of forms, as is calculated to engage and to interest the attention of those before whom that special sentence may be pronounced.

Here, for example, one feature of the Mediatorial character is particularly displayed, in the very *name* in which the Saviour is introduced to our attention. He might have been designated as the Lord Jesus Christ: he might have been denominated in reference to his *divine nature*, and more especially, and above all, in the designation of his Mediatorial character, as "the Son of God." But even in a connexion which speaks of his glory and dignity, it is deemed preferable by him that he should represent himself to us in that part of his Mediatorial character which more particularly respects the assumption of *human nature*; that he should represent himself to us as bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. Though he came down from heaven, though he came down upon the errand and mission that occupied him upon the earth—he called himself "the Son of man;" to shew how nearly he was related to those whom he came into the world to save; at once to mark out the condescending kindness of that act by which the Word became flesh, and was manifest among us for our salvation.

The words before us point out the fact of the Saviour's incarnation; not only in the title that he bears, as "the Son of man," but in the *declaration* that "the Son of man *is come*." You may here observe the emphasis of such a declaration, as delivered by the Saviour at the time when it was delivered, and in the company of those to whom it was addressed. They had not yet

learned to look at him in that point of light in which he had been exhibited to them by the ancient types and sacrifices. Even his disciples were too much regarding him merely as a great Teacher sent from God : but he reveals to them the fact, that he was more than a prophet ; that he was more than a man ; that he was the great and glorious being, immortalized in the inspired writings of the Old Testament as the Son of God, as well as the Son of man ; that the salvation of Israel had already come out of Zion ; that the Son of man had actually appeared upon earth among them ; that the accomplishment of the work which his Father had given him to do is the result of his coming, as thus exhibited to us here : “ The Son of man is come to save that which was lost.”

And this description of the object of his coming, we may be allowed to contrast with another which he is, when he comes a second time into this our world, to achieve. The second time he is to come without a sin-offering unto salvation : the second time he is to come for the accomplishment of that salvation, not by any sacrifice of himself, as he did the first time, but by bringing the world to judgment before his tribunal, and by condemning the wicked for ever. But now he was come into the world to save and deliver from the influence and power of sin : to deliver from all those awful and everlasting consequences in which the sinner would otherwise have been involved. He “ is come to save that which was lost ;” that which was so utterly ruined, that but for the intervention of his almighty power and grace, it never could have been recovered or restored : that which was so utterly lost as that it might be pronounced irretrievable. And so it would have been had not the Son of man come into the world for the express purpose of saving it.

You know that in this simple phrase, our state by nature, as guilty sinners in the sight of God, is plainly and clearly described. We were lost to every thing of hope and of happiness ; lost as to every object that an immortal being might look forward to with confidence and joy. We had no help in ourselves ; no prospect from ourselves. We lay under the damning consequences of God’s violated law, and must have been ruined for ever, had not the Son of man come to save us. We say, my hearers, that in these words you have the proof and statement of the Saviour’s errand and work. The words, you will perceive, in themselves are so plain and simple, that they can scarcely need illustration in the way of comment upon the meaning of each phrase that may have been employed by the Saviour. This is the general character of those statements that are given to us in the Word of God, with respect to the great object of salvation ; for though there are mysteries in the Sacred Writings, and though the very thing which is so simply stated to us here is itself the great “ mystery of godliness,” in which there are depths that we cannot fathom, and heights to which we cannot soar, yet the words that are employed in the passage before us are as plain and simple a declaration as any that ever was made the subject of the inspired writings : and nothing can be more plain, nothing more simple than this.

What reason have we to be thankful, that the great concerns of our salvation are so distinctly stated in the Word of God ! What excuse can we make for misunderstanding and neglecting so important a subject as this ? Is it not written so that he who runs may read ? If there were only some one of these few plain passages of Scripture commended to your attention, would you not be

left utterly without excuse, if you were found to have neglected the things that make for your eternal peace ? In this country, in particular, we sometimes are told by hearers of the Gospel, that to touch upon these plain and well-known truths in every discourse, is a thing that can hardly be expected to suit the minds of our hearers. But in the sister land we feel it absolutely necessary, on the supposition that there may be those present on our ministry who may have no other opportunity to listen to these simple statements, and that they may have one opportunity of doing so, to introduce in every discourse some such exhibition of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, as is contained in these simple words ; so as to leave those who reject that Gospel without any apology for their rejection or neglect. If you, my brethren, know it so well ; if you have the opportunity of hearing it so often ; if the very idea of the selection of such words as these as the subject of discourse lead you to remark that the subject is a trite and common place one, and that the tale has been often told—is it not a point of importance that you should examine, and ask, “ Is it a tale that has ever reached my heart ? Is it a story that has ever told upon the inmost feelings of my mind ? If I am so familiarized with the mere announcement of the truth, am I interested in that salvation for the lost which the Son of man came to accomplish, and without which I am utterly, I am everlasting undone ? ” O, Sirs, in this land of privileges and of means, take heed lest ye neglect this great salvation, and lest a more fearful condemnation overtake you than shall overtake those who perish in utter ignorance of the truths that you are permitted theoretically to know.

But the Word of God is not contented with the exhibition of the divine truth in plain and simple statements : it throws around those statements every variety of illustration that can attract the attention and engage the thoughts, and that may be calculated to rivet that truth upon the minds of those to whom it is addressed. We call upon you, in the second place, to view THE SAVIOUR'S ERRAND AND WORK AS IT IS EXHIBITED TO US IN THAT FIGURATIVE ILLUSTRATION THAT IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWS THE WORDS THAT WE HAVE BEEN JUST CONSIDERING.

“ How think ye ? ” is the question which the Saviour puts ; for by these short inquiries he rouses the attention of his hearers. Christ never designed to preach to thoughtless and inattentive hearers ; those who were thoughtless and inattentive while he was speaking to them the things that made for their eternal peace. And, therefore, instead of running on in one smooth, even, and uninterrupted current, he was always arresting their attention by inquiries calculated to arouse and to exercise their thinking powers. He might have stated simply, “ The Son of man is come to save that which was lost : ” but he says, “ How think ye ? What are *your* views upon the subject ? How do you understand the matter ? Are you thinking upon the matter at all ? ” And if it was necessary for Christ thus to arouse the attention of his hearers to this solemn and interesting truth, how important is it that on a matter which has been so often set before you, which you regard as trite, and with which you have been familiarized in your understanding, that you should be summoned to exercise your thinking powers upon the subject, and ask, “ If it be a subject with which you are so well acquainted, what are your views upon that subject ? what are your feelings and sentiments upon that subject ? Do you know the

errand upon which the Son of man came—that he came to save that which was lost?"

Lest there should be any ignorance, or want of interest upon it, behold the interesting figure by which our Lord explains it more fully to our apprehension. He represents the state of the guilty sinner whom he came into the world to save, under the idea of a *wandering sheep*. The sheep, as you are aware, is an animal particularly prone to wander; and therefore needs to be tended with particular care. In the unenclosed pastures to which they were confined—the wildernesses, as they were called, the large tracts of grazing ground that was left vacant between the different cities in the land of Israel—there was more danger than in our enclosed pastures, of the wandering of the sheep from under the care of the shepherd. These wanderers are described as having broken into "the wilderness," as you find the statement in a corresponding passage, where they are represented as having wandered into the wildernesses by which the usual pasture grounds in Israel were surrounded. And the inclemency to which these wandering sheep were exposed was so dangerous, that even though these wanderings might take place in the summer season, it was necessary for the shepherd immediately to follow the wanderer, and to bring it back into the pasture, lest it be left to perish amidst the dangers which in these mountain districts would surround it.

And under a figure that was thus familiar to the minds of the Jewish spectators, particularly in the country parts, *our* wanderings, *our* errors, and *our* sins, are represented before us. Thus, we have erred and strayed, like lost sheep; we have violated those wholesome pastures that are presented to us in the Word of God; we have followed the bent of our own vain and wicked inclinations: we have wandered every one in his own way. But we are every one walking in paths of danger, and in circumstances that are calculated to be highly displeasing in the sight of our Heavenly Father, and that if not prevented, by our being restored from our wanderings, will ruin our souls for ever. For though we may wander, like sheep, in different directions, our wanderings from God are all equally fatal to the soul. One man may display one peculiarity of sin, and another a different peculiarity; yet the wandering of each is equally fatal, and the wandering souls equally require the seeking of this great Shepherd, in order that he may restore that which will otherwise be lost.

This one sheep, you perceive, is selected as an example, out of a flock, said to consist of a hundred. And this figure is still more amplified and explained in the corresponding passage which I have referred to, in Luke, xv. By this flock, some apprehend that the angels are meant that kept their first estate. Others consider that the Church of God on earth are represented by it, and that characters already converted are spoken of as "the ninety and nine" sheep that are left in the wilderness, in order that the Shepherd may look after this one sheep that had gone astray. Others think, that by these "ninety and nine just persons," as they are called in the corresponding passage of St. Luke's gospel, our Lord refers to the opinion that was entertained among the Jews, that there was a class of persons that might be pronounced "just," and "that needed no repentance," without at all sanctioning such supposition, though he employed it in illustration of his subject. But we rather coincide in the interpretation, by which it is imagined that our Lord speaks of his

hearers, according to the sentiments that most of them entertained about themselves. And this more especially seems to us to be the case in the corresponding chapter of St. Luke than in the words now more immediately before us. Christ was addressing those who were called Pharisees ; men who were righteous in their own esteem, who despised their neighbours, but thought that themselves needed no repentance ; and he addresses them according to their own views of themselves. And yet he evidently denounced those views, when he taught them there was joy over the wandering sheep that was brought back—over one repenting sinner—more than there was over ninety and nine characters such as they were, though they gloried and rejoiced in themselves, that they were righteous, and imagined that they needed no repentance.

We may, however, in whatever point of view we contemplate this flock left in the wilderness, consider the circumstance as indicating the care and kindness of the great Shepherd of the sheep. And we, my brethren, may see another instance of that care and kindness of the Saviour, who in order to bring the matter to the level of our comprehension, places it before us in the light in which we ought to contemplate it. We cannot think of the care of the shepherd exercised over the *entire* flock, without imagining, that between so many objects of care his attention must be distracted and divided. But in order to shew us the *particular* care which the great Shepherd of the sheep can take of *every individual* that belongs to his flock, he is here represented as if he left the ninety and nine without any notice in the wilderness, to bestow all his care and attention upon this wandering one. And this is the fact of the case. Poor sinner, the Saviour is as ready to manifest all that care and attention to your case which it so peculiarly requires, as if there were nobody else in the world to be cared for, and to be provided for. He has such a knowledge of his sheep, he has such an ability to supply their every want, to meet their every exigency, that he may seem as if he actually left the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and as if with all the undivided energies of omnipotence, with all the observance of the omniscient eye, with all the fulness of mercy that runs in his infinite bosom, he lavishes the care, and sympathy, and loving-kindness of heaven upon one sheep that wanders from his fold. It is in this emphatic manner that he desires to bring the loving-kindness of his heart under your observation ; to shew how he careth for you ; to urge you to a concern for your own immortal soul.

We have here in this passage, not only an illustration of the circumstances of man, as compared with this wandering sheep, but we are conducted to behold the testimony of this good Shepherd. He is represented as coming to seek this wanderer ; which he did when he came in human nature to seek and save the lost. The work of Christ in coming into this our world has as much reference to the salvation of every individual believer in him, as if it were wrought out for the salvation of that individual believer only. Each individual believer has as deep and entire an interest in the work of Christ, as if Christ had come into this world to work out a righteousness, and to shed his blood, only for that individual believer. But besides his being said to come into the world to execute this work, the phrase includes and embraces all the means that Christ employs for the declared purpose of bringing them to believe his great and glorious salvation. Hence it is said, with reference to the ministry of the apostles among the Ephesian converts, that *Christ* “came and preached

peace to them that were afar, as well as to them that were nigh." He comes in the ministry of his Word to save that which is lost. He has not left his Church without visits of his grace and mercy. He need not come down again in human flesh, in order to make his soul the second time an offering for sin ; he does come down in the plenitude of his divine influence wherever two or three are met together in his name, that he may seek and save that which is lost, and render his word effectual to the purposes which he has designed that word to answer. We trust that in the communication of that word to our souls to-day, in directing the attention of poor wandering sinners to the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls, he will manifest his presence and blessing in the midst of this worshipping assembly, and prove that it is one of the opportunities on which Christ goes into the wilderness, and brings back that which is lost. He is represented as coming into the wilderness after these wandering sheep : and he perseveres in the use of the various means that he employs, until every wandering sheep that has been straying from him, that is to be brought back to his fold, is found and is brought back again.

For this we conceive to be obviously taught us from the language of the concluding verse ; where, in obvious connexion with the preceding verses, it is said, " It is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish." Hence we see, that not only is the work that Christ accomplished upon Calvary effectual for the purpose it was designed to answer, but that he exercises various means of providence and grace ; and that if one is ineffectual another is employed, until at last the wanderer is brought in and restored, however far he may have wandered, and however closely on the verge of ruin his wanderings may have brought him. While this is the refreshing doctrine here taught, while it is revealed in connexion with the gathering in of the entire people of God, let none for a moment use it as if it warranted them to be indifferent to the means that may be employed to direct them to this great Shepherd, but see that they have the evidence of being of the number of those sheep of whom it is declared, that " none of these little ones should perish."

We are told, further, that this great Shepherd *carries back* the sheep when he has found it. As if he were unwilling to trust it with the possibility of wandering back again ; as if to indicate to us, at all events, that every means has been employed that is requisite for its security, and for bringing it safely to the fold, and to prevent any of the dangers which it might be exposed to by the way—the Shepherd is represented as bearing it upon his shoulders ; intimating, perhaps, the way in which he bore the burthen that would otherwise have sunk it down for ever ; but certainly to indicate that loving-kindness and compassion with which he bears the sins, and carries the sorrows, of his people : yea, bears and carries them through the various perils of the wilderness, and brings them to his presence with exceeding joy.

The joy of that Shepherd over the lost sheep that has been found, is represented here in this connexion in a pleasing point of view. It was, in fact, the joy that was set before the Saviour, for which he endured the cross, despising the shame. It was the accomplishment of this object, to restore to joys that would have been eternally forfeited each one of his wandering sheep, that attracted him from heaven. It was this that caused him to put on a human form : it was this which led him through the sufferings and sorrows in which

he struggled here below : it was this which caused him to endure every pang, to agonize, and to die ; to all this he cheerfully submitted, in order that he might save that which was lost. And for the joy thus set before him he was enabled to endure the cross, despising the shame. He now counts his sufferings as comparatively nothing, while as each of these trophies of his love is brought home to the world of glory, there is an accession of happiness in heaven, and fresh joy awakened in the presence of the angels of God, over each individual sinner that repenteth.

But in the third and last place, we have here an assertion of THE GREAT PRINCIPLE OF THE DIVINE CONDUCT, THAT IS DEVELOPED IN THE WORK TO WHICH WE HAVE BEEN ENDEAVOURING TO TURN YOUR ATTENTION. "Even so," it is added, in the close of the passage we have been considering, "it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish."

We would have you observe the connexion that is here obviously formed between the *end* in view, and the *means* for the accomplishment of that end. You find that while the will of God is here declared to you, in these words, and while that will is to secure the salvation of every individual of his people, the means by which that was to be accomplished, is as clearly and distinctly set forward to be, "the Son of man coming to save that which is lost." It is the great purpose of his going after every individual wanderer, seeking that which is gone astray, finding it, bringing it back upon his shoulders rejoicing ; it is, in fact, the whole economy of means, from the death and sufferings of the Saviour onward, through the dispensations of Providence, in the preaching of his blessed gospel, in the accomplishment of the work of conversion, and in the restoration of every individual sinner under heaven that is brought to a knowledge of the truth.

And now to sum up what we consider to be the meaning of the assertion, what we consider its true import here. We consider it as proving, that it *is* the Father's intention to save all his people. "It is *not* the will." The negative form in which the declaration is couched is one that always serves to give more emphasis to an expression. "It is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish." It *is*, in other words, his intention, that all his elect people should be saved. That intention is so frequently declared in Scripture, is so necessarily involved in the very doctrine of election, however that doctrine may be stated, that it surely is unnecessary to dwell upon the circumstance, in order to shew you, that the language of the text asserts what is the fact, that it is the Father's will that his people should not perish. In fact, this is involved in every discovery that is made to us of the Gospel ; it is involved in every promise given to those by whom that Gospel is believed ; it is involved in every one of the records of the Gospel ; and if this were not the result that was secured, where would be the value of the Gospel itself ? Why you would only be told of the proclamation of that Gospel to the world of the ungodly.

But we call your attention more particularly, to what is here stated, in order to ground upon the circumstance another remark, and that is, that in the matter of redemption, the will of the Father and of the Son are equal. We conceive that there are views entertained at the present day, which are calculated to

represent the Father and the Son as if they were divided in their councils ; that it was the intention of the Father that his elect people should be saved, but that a more general intention occupied the mind of the Son, in achieving and accomplishing the work of redemption. Now we conceive with reference to that work, from first to last, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, are one : and that if it was the will of the Father with reference to the work of our Lord Jesus Christ, that not one of his little ones should perish, the same is the will of the Son in accomplishing the work of redemption, and the same is the will of the Holy Spirit in the application of that work to every believer's heart. Whatever difficulties may be supposed to be avoided in the matter, by any attempt at representing the object of redemption as more wide and general than it is, we apprehend that these difficulties are only removed and still removed forward, to be met and encountered again and again ; and that the mystery will remain the same, inscrutable to any attempt of finite comprehension ; save that when all might have been left to perish, multitudes by the grace and the mercy of God should be freely and of his sovereignty saved.

But we would further remark that the work of Christ was designed to accomplish that intention, and is efficacious to its accomplishment. This observation seems to us derivable from the connexion in which the language of the text stands, when it says, " Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish;" these words are connected with the preceding words, which describe the Saviour as come to save that which was lost; and the account that he gives of himself, as the good shepherd going into the wilderness, and recovering these wanderers. " Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish." How does he prove that it is not his will ? By the work that the Saviour accomplished on behalf of his people. The object of that work, then, is the restoration of the wandering and lost sheep ; the bringing back of his banished ones ; the redemption of his elect people ; and the preventing of the perishing for ever, of those who otherwise must have been eternally lost. As in this is implied the object and work of redemption, so is it likewise implied that that work shall issue in the accomplishment of that object : otherwise in such close connexion with the assertion is the work itself, that it could not be brought forward as a proof, that the will of our Father which is in heaven, is to save us ; nor could Christ if he had not accomplished that will say, with reference to himself, that the work which his heavenly Father gave him to accomplish he had accomplished.

The doctrine of the passage we have been considering is a doctrine which will illustrate the truth of the statement, that there is a fulness and an efficiency in the work of Jesus Christ to accomplish the salvation of the whole world, if the whole world would come and put their trust in that work for their salvation. It is a doctrine that will not allow us to view the design of redemption as a mere general abstract design ; but we must regard it as one designed and accomplished for a particular purpose, which purpose was the will of the Father and the Son, accomplished in the salvation of Christ's believing people. Indeed we know not what is meant by considering the redemption of Christ as an atonement for sin in the abstract ; for sin in the abstract we conceive is a thing that has no existence. We must consider it as exhibited in the persons and conduct of sinners ; and we cannot conceive of atonement for sin as efficacious

until you have referred it to individuals by whom sin has been committed, and it has been presented on behalf of those who have been guilty of the transgression.

While, therefore, we magnify the work of Christ, while we say there are no limits to its infinite efficacy, by applying it to the individual that believes, we rejoice in the assurance that he died the just for the unjust ; that he gave his life a ransom for his people ; that in the counsels of eternity, and in the accomplishment of redemption, the Father, and the Son, and the Spirit are one, and that in the coming of Christ and in the Saviour's death, we read that it is not the will of our Father which is in heaven, that one of his little ones should perish.

And in applying the subject we have been considering, we ask you, my hearers, have you yet learnt that your characters are that of lost and wandering sheep ? Have you yet once thought of listening to that great Shepherd ? Then you must at last wander on to your own everlasting undoing. You are ever being sought after by Him who has represented himself to you in such engaging characters in the Gospel of his word. Have you ever sought this Shepherd, or have you given any evidence that you are of the number of those whom he has sought after, and whom he has graciously restored ? With reference to such an important subject as this, should we be satisfied while we are still wanderers ? Should we be contented while we are in such danger of being eternally lost ? While we have the assurance of this good and gracious Shepherd before us that he is come to save that which is lost, shall we not lay hold of the hope set before us in the Gospel, and seek an interest in that finished work, which is so effectual for the accomplishment of the purposes of divine and everlasting mercy ? If the great Shepherd rejoices over the wandering sheep that is found, as he brings it back, and if there is then joy in the presence of the angels of God, what thanks and what gratitude do we owe him for the mercy that he has displayed in seeking after us, in giving himself for the salvation of his believing people, in providing the various means of grace by which he is drawing sinners to himself, and restoring them to the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls ? But if we profess to thank him for these means of grace, and to rejoice over them, have they been effectual to our restoration ? Have we heard the Shepherd's voice speaking to us in his word ; have we accepted the invitations of his mercy : and are we safely folded in the pastures of his love, coming in and going out, finding rest and peace unto our souls in and through Jesus Christ ?

May we be enabled to examine ourselves upon these important points ! However much we may have hitherto neglected these plain and obvious principles of the Bible, and been disposed to trifle with them, may every individual here present be henceforth a living and practical illustration of what we have now been considering. To God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be endless praises. Amen.

## THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE GOSPEL.

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REV. V. WARD,

GREAT QUEEN STREET CHAPEL, JULY 27, 1834.

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He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"—MICAH, vi. 8.

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In a preceding verse the Prophet introduces a person inquiring, " Where-withal shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God?—how he may worship him so as to be accepted of him: an inquiry most rational, proper, and important. But to those persons who have God's revelation, the inquiry, as proposed especially to any fellow-creature, or as made to God himself, is superseded.

"*He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good.*" Those who are blessed with the privilege of possessing the Jewish Scriptures, know how they may approach God with acceptance; but much more those who are blessed with the privilege of possessing the Christian Scriptures, the *whole* counsel of God, his *entire* revelation. "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good;" and if thou art not *in possession* of what is good, it is not for want of the *means* of knowing what is good: if thou art walking in error, thine error is awful. The way of truth is open and plain before thee.

There have been, as many of you know, considerable disputes in those countries where the Scriptures were unknown, with regard to man's chief or sovereign good. God hath decided the controversy in regard to those who receive the Scriptures. *Religion* is man's chief good. It is good in its origin; it cometh down from the Father of lights: it is good in its nature; it is good in its tendency, and in its end. It is man's *chief* good. It possesses those properties which are essential to any thing claiming such a distinction.

There is nothing in it but what is *most fit, and proper, and suitable to man*, whether considered in himself, or in his relation to God or to his fellow-creatures. In many of the things pointed out by the ancients as man's chief good, there was much that was unsuitable, improper, and wicked. Religion possesses another quality which was not possessed by the various objects presented by the persons alluded to, to their fellow-creatures: it is a *satisfying* good. It is a good which possesses the power of healing all the various disorders of the human mind and heart: it possesses the power to console, comfort, exhilarate, and delight the redeemed spirit of man, in all the circumstances through which, in the providence of God, he may be called to pass in this world. It is a *universal* good; not a good restricted to any class of persons, to the persons of any one age, or country, or locality. It is a good as

well suited to the wants of the prince as of the peasant, and of the peasant as of the prince. It is a good needed by the learned and the illiterate, the rich and the poor. It is a good which our God hath mercifully provided for all, and which he waits to bestow upon all. It is an *everlasting* good; not a good which terminates with our present existence, but as vast as the necessities and capacities of the human spirit; a good lasting as the duration of that spirit; a good to be enjoyed in another world under circumstances far more delightful, and blessed, and glorious, than we can at present imagine.

“ *What doth the Lord require of thee?*” That is, What is the substance of those duties which are incumbent upon thee, in seeking and in holding fast this chief good? You remember that God wrote the law, often called “ the Law of Moses,” upon two tables of stone. Upon the first table God wrote those duties which man owes immediately to his God, and on the second table, those duties which we owe to one another. You remember that when Moses came down from the mount, having these tables of the law in his hand, and found the children of Israel revelling in an idolatrous feast, he broke the tables of the law. Now we find many people breaking the tables of the law one against another. Here is one person cries up what he calls *piety*, but he is exceedingly indifferent to the claims of *morality*. “ Walking with God” is the subject which occupies all his conversation (so far as religion is the subject of it), while he forgets justice and mercy. Another man piques himself upon his honour, his integrity, the correctness of his dealings with his fellow-creatures, and his benevolence of heart and of conduct; while he neglects, if he does not despise piety. But He who requires that we “ walk humbly with God,” requires that we “ do justly and love mercy;” and He who requires that man should “ do justly and love mercy,” requires that he should “ walk humbly with God.”

The table of the law which instructs us in our duty to God, is generally the first presented to our notice in the Scriptures: in the text the order is reversed. It is required that every man *do justly* to his fellow-man. This commandment is exceedingly broad. Those persons who have not studied it, nor made it the subject of their meditation, as the “ blessed” man is described in the first Psalm as doing, and of whom it is said that he “ meditates thereon day and night,” and that “ his delight is in it”—those who have not so studied it are perhaps not aware how extensive are the claims of justice. We are required to act with the exactest integrity and uprightness towards our fellow-creatures in all respects, and towards *every one* of our fellow-creatures; to “ do justly”—to act with integrity, uprightness, and correctness, in reference to the person of our neighbour, the property of our neighbour, the family of our neighbour, the reputation of our neighbour, the opinions and the feelings of our neighbour. And there is one rule of justice which we should wear—not upon our garments; not merely as frontlets between our eyes; not as bracelets on our arms—a rule not merely to be written in our parlours, and kitchens, and shops, and counting-houses—but which should be written upon our *hearts*: “ Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.” This is the grand rule of justice and righteousness, of conduct and speech, yea, and of thinking also, to be observed towards our fellow-creatures.

But this is not all. We are not to do justice strictly. Every man, whatever

his character, however degraded in society, however wicked, however *unjust* himself, however false—every man has a right to expect justice at our hand. And this cannot be dispensed with with impunity. We are not to think that we have done all that is required of us towards our fellow-creature when we have done him strict justice : he hath other claims upon us ; God hath given him those claims. We are to “do justly, and to *love mercy* :” mercy which is ever ready to listen to complaints—ever ready, according to the ability of the person in whose heart mercy lives, to relieve the wants, to pardon the offences, to cover the faults ; mercy which delights to imitate the Father of mercies ; to do good according to its power to all mankind, under all circumstances, but “especially to them who are of the household of faith.” We must act impartially as to the objects of our attention when we are shewing mercy. We must remember there is an object which we are most likely to overlook, but which is particularly presented before us by the God of our life and our salvation : it is our *enemy*. We would rather shew kindness to those who shew kindness to us ; we would rather dispense favours where we have received favours ; we would rather invite to partake of our bounty, if we have any thing to bestow, those who have conducted themselves in like manner towards us. But to look askance at our enemy, to think of him with displeasure, if not with wrath, sometimes with malignity, and ready to inquire how we can be revenged, is forbidden by Him who hath said, “Avenge not yourselves : vengeance is mine : I will repay.” “If thine enemy hunger, feed him ; if he thirst, give him drink ; if he be naked, clothe him : for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head :” as the artists are in the habit of doing : when they wish to extract the precious metal from the ore, they heap upon it large quantities of fire that they may soften and melt it.

But the text does not say “Be merciful :” no, that is not enough : there must not only be merciful conduct and language, but a merciful *heart* within us : “Do justly and *love mercy*.” It must be our delight to shew mercy. I remember a scene which took place at Bristol nearly thirty years ago. The venerable Mr. Dawson, a Methodist preacher, (known I dare say to some of the elder persons in this congregation) had had some unpleasant correspondence with a younger minister, now also I believe in the heavenly world. They met together, and mutually explained. “O sir,” said the young man, “I was not aware of that ; if that be the state of the case, I beg your pardon, sir.” The good old man took him by his arms and saluted him, and said, “Pardon ! it is the easiest thing in this world with me to forgive.” The scene made an impression on my heart which still remains, and will remain. And if we possess the good things of religion which come down from heaven, it will be the easiest, or one of the easiest, things in the world for us to forgive. The man who goes to his closet, and comes out again with a sour, malignant temper, and who cannot think or speak of a person who has offended him but with deep malignity and sourness of heart, may have the *form* of religion, but to the *power* of it he must be a stranger. We should feel that we are in our very element when we have an opportunity of shewing mercy either to the bodies or the souls of our fellow-creatures, and particularly those who have made themselves our enemies.

“And walk humbly with thy God.” This means at least three things—reconciliation, affection, and intercourse.

**Reconciliation.** Two cannot walk together except they be agreed. Now God and man are not agreed, as man is found in his unconverted state. They are completely in a state of disagreement. There are three classes of persons with whom God can never be agreed. The *immoral*. God be at one with an immoral person, one who continues in his immorality, who is breaking his commandments daily! The thing is absolutely impossible. *Unbelievers* of every class and every grade form another company with whom God is not in a state of agreement. What! be in a state of amity and unity with those who give him the lie? God is peculiarly jealous of his truth: he is a just and a jealous God, in whatever point of view we contemplate him. But he has "magnified his name above all his word:" and those who call in question his truth offend him as much as those who neglect his moral precepts. The *worldly-minded* constitute another class with whom God cannot be at one. These are found almost in all places. You may be saints of the first order, for any thing I can say to the contrary: but I know it is not usual to have such a congregation as this anywhere without some sad sinners amongst them. Say, if you can with truth, that you have found a man who believes every word of God—who is the most strictly moral and correct in his deportment, and whose claims to admission or continuance in a Christian Church are indisputable: yet if God sees that man's heart cleaving to the world, loving the world, going out after the world, he cannot be at one with him, and that man cannot walk with God. And may a money-lover walk with God? Then may an idolater walk with God, for those who love money are idolaters in the eyes of God. A lover of applause and popularity, a hunter after human fame, walk with God! Impossible: "How can ye believe who seek honour one from another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God?" The pleasure-lover walk with God! Nay, those who live in pleasure are dead while they live. Before any of these persons can walk with God they must repent of their wickedness, their immorality, their unbelief, their worldliness; they must seek and obtain mercy through the blood of the Lamb: and then when brought into a state of reconciliation, when there is a oneness between them and their heavenly Father, then may they commence their walk with God.

*Affection* is another thing implied in walking with God. All God's people love him; the youngest in his family, the feeblest in his family, can say as Peter did—though it may be with some degree of trembling under particular circumstances—"Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee. It is the grief of my heart that I love thee so little. Yet I do love thee: if I do not, what do I love? Is there any thing in the heaven above, or in the earth beneath, on which my heart is placed if I love not thee?" And we know that God loves his people; we cannot tell how much, but we know that he loves them so much as to call them by the most endearing names and appellations. He says concerning them, "He that touches them touches the apple of my eye;" and that "it were better for a man that a mill-stone were hung about his neck, and that he were cast into the sea, than that he injure one of God's little ones." He rejoices over them with joy, and joys over them with singing.

Walking with God implies *intercourse*. I mean nothing visionary, nothing fanatical, nothing inconsistent with the exercise of the soundest reason, most severely disciplined. Yet the intercourse between God and his people, is as

real as any intercourse is which takes place between spirits in heaven, or any interchange of thought and of kindness which takes place between men on earth. Is it reality, or is it imagination, that God Almighty communicates his love to the hearts of his people? Those who are indeed his people can answer most satisfactorily: they know as certainly as any thing that has ever happened to them that God daily breathes the breath of heavenly love into their hearts; and they feel and know that they breathe back again this love to Him in praise, in prayer, and in holy obedience.

This passage of Scripture has dwelt much upon my mind during the last few weeks; and in thinking, especially upon the latter part of it, my thoughts have sometimes taken a direction this way:—"Walk *humbly* with thy God." Well, is humility essential to my walking with God? Cannot I walk *proudly* with God? Cannot I walk with God, and indulge at least a degree of pride? Cannot I look proudly, think proudly—think highly of myself, desire that others may think highly of me—wish to make myself of some consequence in the world and in the church? Is it impossible to do this and walk with God? The answer comes back forcibly again and again, "It is impossible." "He beholdeth the proud afar off." "He hateth the proud look." "He filleth the hungry with good things; the rich he sendeth empty away." Well, if I walk with God at all, I must walk humbly with God. Yes. One reason why so many people complain, and, when they do not complain, refuse to lament on account of the absence of their God, and the absence of religious peace, and love, and joy—is, this abominable pride, which is not resisted and cast away, and trampled under foot, as it ought to be. Amongst the things which God hates with a very special hatred is pride.

"Walk humbly with thy God." The marginal reading is very peculiar: "What do I require of thee but to do justly, to love mercy, and *to humble thyself to walk with thy God?*" If it had been told us that God humbled himself to walk with us, we should at once see the reasonableness and the propriety of it. O, what condescension! What a stoop for our Almighty Creator and Preserver to humble himself to walk with a worm of the earth! But he says, "Humble thyself to walk with God." Yes, such is the pride of the human spirit, that it has to be humbled before God and man before he can walk with God. And this is not merely the case with persons who fill exalted stations, and whose pride has been fed by peculiar circumstances; but it is the case with every beggar and every pauper in the land; there is not a human being in the world who is not by nature proud and self-willed. Before any of us can walk with God, we must be humbled under his mighty hand; and the more deeply and thoroughly we humble ourselves, the more closely we shall walk with God.

I speak not of that humility which is woven into the character by artifice and cunning; which consists in using abusive epithets towards ourselves when in company with religious people, in order that we may have the praise of humility. All this is pride of the most detestable kind, and proceeds from the worst principle. There is hypocrisy mixed with the pride: as soon as ever you join with a man who is thus abusing himself, and say, "Yes, I believe all you say; I believe you are that very bad man you describe yourself to be"—why he is offended directly, and will ask, "Why, what do you know of me?" No; I speak of that humility which is wrought in the inmost soul by the finger

of God, and which makes the person who possesses and cherishes it feel what the heavenly Fletcher used to express every night when he was lying down:—

“ I nothing have, I nothing am;  
My treasure is the bleeding Lamb,  
Both now and evermore.”

There are two doctrinal heresies against which our text is opposed. The first is, the heresy of those who are seeking to be *justified by works*. There are still many heretics of this description in the places where I have lived; perhaps there are some in London too; there may be some in this chapel, “ O, I know nothing of your mystical justification by faith,” says one: “ I try to do justly and love mercy: I do my duty to God and man, and I expect I shall be justified and quickened at last on this ground.” Do you? And have you thought upon it? And are you willing to risk your eternal all in this way? Can you challenge the Almighty Judge on this ground, and say, “ Treat me according to my demerits, and according to my works?” Have you *never* been guilty of any injustice? Not in the slightest degree? Have you committed no act of domestic injustice, of social injustice? Are you quite free from all injustice in the shop and in the market? Have you always done justice to the motives, to the sentiments, to the opinions, to the characters of others? Have you never spoken evil of an absent person? Unless this is the case you cannot be justified by works. If there is one flaw, one defect, it is enough to shut you out of heaven. Have you *always* loved mercy? Have you never been “ in a passion,” as it is called—never dealt out undue severity towards a fellow-creature—never shut up your bowels of compassion against an enemy—never indulged an unkind word or thought? Have you always walked with God? Alas! you know nothing about it: you have not begun this walk yet: you are not reconciled to God; you do not love him. If we knew your habits, and your history, we could tell you perhaps several things which you love far better than you love your God. There are many people who not only love gold and silver, their sons and daughters, more than they love their God; but there are many who love the vilest practices and the vilest associates more than they love their God. “ By the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified.”

“ Ah,” says the Antinomian, “ *that* is the Gospel; *that* is the precious truth of the Gospel. I expect to be justified by *faith alone*, and saved by *faith alone*: and this sermon of your’s (if it may be called a sermon) is far too legal for me: but you are now getting right.” Alas! I trust you hope you will get right too. Remember your faith is not worth a straw unless it lead you to “ do justly, to love mercy, and walk humbly with your God.” Yours is not the faith of God’s people—not the faith of the operation of his Spirit; it is a mere fancy which you and others call faith; it is not faith; or if we must call it by that name at all, it is what St. James calls “ *a dead faith*:” and what good will a dead faith do either now or hereafter?

Let us, then, seek this reconciliation—seek to be justified by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and pray that the holy laws of our God may be written upon our hearts, and deeply engraved there, and that we may henceforth “ do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God.”

## THE CONCURRENCE OF THE DISPENSATIONS OF PROVIDENCE IN THE ETERNAL WELFARE OF THE BELIEVER.

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REV. J. A. JAMES,

SURREY CHAPEL, MAY 11, 1834.

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" And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."—ROMANS, viii. 28.

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PERHAPS there is no single passage of Holy Scripture which has yielded so much strong consolation to the afflicted people of God as this, pregnant as it is with the profoundest theological truth, and the richest spiritual comfort. The object of the inspired writer is to comfort the saints under every persecution; and he does this by directing them to that glory which awaits them in another world, when their sufferings on earth will be ended, and to which those sufferings were not worthy for a moment to be compared. He then, in order to illustrate the magnitude of this object of the Christian's hope, represents the whole rational world, including the very heathen themselves, as lifting up their heads, and looking around with glistening eyes and longing hearts, for the discovery of some better state of existence than that in which they were placed here. And this establishes the fact, that the hope of a better world is an antidote for all the sorrows of this. He then goes on to open another source of consolation, in the effectual aid of the Holy Spirit to stimulate, and sustain, and purify the righteous. The consolatory strain is continued in most extraordinary language, and still more extraordinary ideas, to the close of the chapter.

In calling your attention to the text, I shall, in the first place, consider the high and dignified character which the Apostle presents to view: and, secondly, the immense privilege which is inseparably connected with this character.

In the first place, THE HIGH AND DIGNIFIED CHARACTER WHICH THE APOSTLE PRESENTS TO VIEW.

And he describes this, first, by the acting of this character towards God, and then, secondly, by the actings of the Divine Mind towards this individual.

In the first place, the Apostle represents these characters by *the state and acting of their minds towards God*. The persons here exhibited to view are described as *loving God*. To love God and be a Christian are convertible propositions. No man loves God who is not a Christian; every man who is a Christian does love God. He loves God not merely as the God of nature, in the displays of his power and wisdom in the works of creation, but as the God of grace—God in Christ, “reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing unto men their sins;” the God of holiness; the God of justice, of truth, and of mercy. And this love operates in the way of awful veneration, exalted

esteem animated delight, profound submission, and practical obedience. 'This is the love of God.

But whence arises this principle in the heart that was originally destitute of it, and was in fact filled with the contrary principle of enmity to God? From the actings of God's mind towards that individual, who is thus represented as loving God. The love of God is here traced up to God's calling: "To them that love God, to them who are *the called*." The word "called," in the New Testament, has a two-fold signification. In some places it means the general invitation which is given to all men to repent and believe in Christ, and seek the blessings of eternal salvation: in other places, in the text for instance, it signifies that general invitation rendered effectual to the conversion of the soul, by the influence of the Holy Ghost. In this sense it is synonymous with "conversion," and "regeneration," and is called, in the language of divines, "effectual calling;" by which an entire moral change of character is effected. From being carnal the individual becomes spiritual, and commits his soul for eternal salvation into the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the great atonement for sin; loves God, and lives to his glory. There never can exist this love of God in the human heart, without this effectual calling of the Holy Spirit. We may as well expect roses to spring up amidst the ice of the Pole, or the sands of the desert, as imagine that the sinner, uncalled of God, can love him. We must begin here: the moral disposition of the mind must be changed, or there can be no right disposition towards God. And in every instance where this effectual calling takes place, there the love of God will be the result.

But whence this effectual calling? It comes, as we have already said, from God. But is it the result of a momentary impulse of caprice? No; but of a purpose: they are "called according to *the purpose of God*." "Purpose" means forethought or intention. To imagine God does any thing without that forethought or intention, would be to ascribe to him such a want of wisdom as would be a blemish to the character, and reproach to the conduct, of any individual on earth. This is a purpose in reference to *each individual*. It has been attempted to reconcile and avoid the doctrine of the divine decrees of the personal election of individuals to salvation, by speaking of the operation of these decrees as only for the selection of a nation or a tribe to the external privileges of the Gospel. The text and the context are a sufficient confutation of this idea. The Apostle must necessarily be speaking of individuals, because he is speaking of an individual *act*, and the enjoyment of individual *privileges*. To "love God" is not the act of a nation or of a tribe; and to "be justified," which is also spoken of in the context, cannot apply to nations. Nations may receive the external general invitation, but they cannot as such "love God," be "justified," or "glorified." The whole reasoning of the Apostle has reference to "the creature." If, therefore, the act of loving God be the act of the creature, and this only be the result of calling from God, that calling must be from him. And if calling be the result of the divine purpose, that divine purpose must be individual. And if thus called by the divine purpose, then also must that purpose have existed from eternity; since there is nothing new in the plans of the divine mind, or as to its intentions. Consequently, my friends, from this reasoning we infer the Scriptural truth of that doctrine which we hold, of the individual election of those who are brought to salvation, first to holiness here, then to eternal life hereafter.

I now go on to dwell, more at large, upon THE IMMENSE PRIVILEGES WHICH THE APOSTLE CONNECTS, AND INSEPARABLY CONNECTS, WITH THIS CHARACTER.

"All things work together for good." Now the general sentiment is this; that all the dispensations of Providence concur in producing the eternal benefit of those who "love God," and who are "the called according to his purpose."

In the first place, under this head of discourse, let us consider *the end to be accomplished*. The "good" of these individuals. The meaning of the term "good" here, can have no reference whatever, at least but in a very subordinate degree, to any temporal advantage. It is very true God does sometimes cause present inconveniences and perplexities to produce some great ultimate benefit. We thus see occasions of transient evil are followed by permanent good: and therefore it is a sin, in the greatest extremity even of temporal affliction, to plunge at once into hopeless despair. We have a very striking illustration of this sentiment and fact, in the interesting history of Joseph, which seems to have been intended to furnish us with an imperishable record, and a striking representation, of the whole scheme and workmanship of divine Providence.

But the "good" here spoken of does not apply to any thing temporal, to our health, to our ease, to our fortune, but to our eternal interest. It is to be added, that God is working, or causing the dispensation of his Providence to work, for our spiritual good and for our eternal welfare. Who does not see, my brethren, that afflictions have a beneficial tendency in the promotion of our spiritual interests. They bring us to reflection; they stop us often in that too thoughtless career which we are pursuing; they quicken prayer; they stimulate hope; they wean us from the world; they shew us the folly of creature dependency; they mortify our corruptions; they humble our pride; they loosen the ties that bind us to this transient and perishing state of things. But even spiritual good is not the highest reference of the expression as used by the Apostle in the text. It is a word that looks to heaven, and points to eternity. It is best explained, perhaps, by the Apostle Paul himself, in another of his epistles, where he employs that astonishing expression, "Our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

The meaning, then, of the text is, that all the dispensations of God's providence concur in the production of our eternal welfare. God is to be the judge of the good that is to be the result: he himself is to decide upon the means by which that good is to be produced. Our fancy has nothing to do with the fact. He has determined to promote, not our present ease, not our present comfort, but our eternal welfare. His eye and his heart are for us, where ours ought to be for ourselves—upon heaven and eternity. God has nothing less in view for the people whom he has chosen than the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory: and he is making the dispensations of his providence to concur in the fulfilment of this design of his grace.

Now, my brethren, let us consider, in the second place, under this head of discourse, *the means which are to accomplish this end*. "All things." The term "all" here is, like the other terms of Scripture, to be explained by the subject matter in hand, and by the context. Some have carried the expression so far, as to include sin among the all things which work together for good to them who are the called according to God's purpose. Not that the advocates of this opinion would for a moment contend, that the professing Christian is

to sin in order that good might be the result. They simply mean, that the fallings and backslidings of God's people, are by his power and grace overruled for their good, so as to make them more humble and more watchful; so that thus even their transgressions might be said to concur in the production of their eternal welfare. The sentiment, even thus guarded by the accompanying explanation of those who hold it, in my judgment is neither true nor safe. This idea certainly was not, if we regard the context, in the contemplation of the Apostle. He was speaking of sufferings, and not of sins: and it appears to me that we have no right to carry the expression further than the Holy Spirit intended it, in the passage where he has enjoined it. My brethren, it may be admitted that the backslider has come out of his transgressions by penitence, and by penitence has been rendered more watchful, more humble more prayerful; but even this would not prove that the sin had been working together for his good. Bear in remembrance what I have said the Apostle looks to—eternity; he directs our view to heaven: and therefore, although penitence may have rendered the backslider more humble, more watchful, and more prayerful in this world, yet who can tell but that in another world, the sin which he has committed may not have caused a deduction from the glory which will be conferred upon him there? Sin is evil, only evil, and that continually. And even in reference to the case that has been supposed, the case of true penitence, it is not the sin that does the man good, it is the grace that has been given to bring him to repentance that confers the benefit.

Those who have advocated the opinion which I am now controverting, have endeavoured to establish an analogy which in my view will not hold good. They say that poisons are evils in themselves; but that in certain combinations, and up to a certain amount, they may be productive of benefit to the corporeal frame. I say that that analogy does not hold good: up to that amount in which the poison is beneficial to the human frame it is not an evil; it does good; but sin is *altogether* an evil. But we have been also told, that the persecutions of the wicked must be among the things which work together for good; and therefore here are sinful actions productive of benefit. That the results of the sin of persecution are beneficial there can be no question: but the sin passes not over from the individual who commits it to him who receives in eternity the benefit of the operation of the sin. It is not the sin that does good to these suffering victims, it is only the Word of God making the actions of the sinner, contrary to his own intention, to be beneficial to the Christian. The sin remains in the heart of the persecutor, and only the suffering comes upon the individual who derives the benefit from the action. Therefore, my brethren, it is not the sin which works together for good; it is only the suffering that is beneficial to him who is called to endure it. I abhor, from the bottom of my soul, the idea that sin, of itself, can be counted among the all things that work together for good to them that love God, and are the called according to his purpose.

The Apostle is here speaking of afflictions: and in the first rank of those that will ultimately be beneficial to him who is called to endure them, are the trials that come upon those who are called to bear the cross for Christ's sake. Ye martyrs—for such I call every sufferer for Christ's sake, whether he groan out his days in a dungeon, or shed his blood upon the scaffold, or not—ye martyrs for Christ's sake, this passage was written, I was going to say specially certainly primarily, for you. The reproaches that come upon you for Christ;

sake will be like those clouds, and like them only, that pass for a season over the sun, hiding his beams, but promising soon to emerge with brighter splendour than ever. Those disfavours that you receive from men, are preparing you for still richer expressions of favour from God. Those losses that you may now be called to endure for the sake of religious principle, will inevitably enrich the inheritance which grace has prepared for you above all things. Those sleepless nights and tearful days which you are sometimes called to spend for the sake of religion, will issue in joys, made more rapturous from the very sufferings through which they have been received. There is no Christian so like his Master in this world as he who is called to suffer for his Master's sake : and there is no one who will be so near to his Master in the world to come. If you suffer with him, you shall reign with him : if you bear his cross, you shall sit down with him upon his throne, even as he has sat down with his Father upon his throne. Cheer up, believer : the robe of your glory is making ; the crown of your honour is moulding ; the laurel of your victory is growing, and soon shall be plucked and worn by you, in that blessed world where Christ sits, and loves to delight and honour those who have honoured him, amidst reproaches, and contumely, and suffering upon earth.

Connected with these higher classes of the Christian's suffering, are the ordinary calamities which we are all more or less called to endure. The painful sickness, borne with unmurmuring resignation ; the loss of property, submitted to with the consolatory thought, that it has been ordained of God, and with the knowledge that we have a higher treasure, where neither moth nor rust do corrupt ; the departure of friends, whom God in the mysteries of his providence has snatched from the arms of your affection, but whom we have given up without rebellion to the will of Him who had a better right to them than ourselves—all the perplexities, and disappointments, and trials of life, all the perturbations of mind, all the instances of inconsistency that we meet with in this world, all, in fact, that can afflict the believer, enters within the compass of this delightful expression : “ All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”

But just observe the words mentioned in the text : “ *work together.*” The believer's history is not an unconnected series of events, which have no dependence or influence upon each other ; they form a perfect scheme. His life, his death, his infancy, his old age, with all the intermediate seasons, all enter into the one grand scheme which Providence is causing to produce his spiritual benefit. Let us look, my brethren, how many influences strive, even in reference to our temporal comforts, to promote our enjoyment and comfortable abode in this world. The sun, the moon, the stars, the elements ; food, raiment, habitation ; all these things are working together for our comfort ; so that man, in one sense, may be said to stand at the very centre of the universe, where all its parts and all its combinations are working together for the production of his benefit. And so it is with respect to our spiritual welfare. How many aids, how many instruments, how many causes, how many influences are perpetually provided to promote our spiritual welfare ? The Deity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit ; angels, patriarchs, prophets, apostles, evangelists, martyrs, ministers, missionaries, the Bible, the Sabbath, the fellowship of the saints—all concurring to promote our spiritual welfare. And so it is with respect to the events of Providence, all are concurring—I say *concurring*—for our spiritual good.

The believer, looking at the scheme of providence, in reference to his own eternal welfare, is not unlike an individual surveying some complicated piece of machinery, where the manufacturer himself stands by, holding in his hand the various articles which this mechanism is intended to produce ; and saying to the spectator, " See these apparently contradictory movements ; hear this noise and confusion : you cannot tell the design, perhaps, of one of the wheels, much less enter into the combination of the whole ; but I can, and here are the results of these various movements." So does God say to his people, surveying the mechanism of Providence, the wheels of which are so varied, and in some of its movements so apparently contradictory : " Hear this noise and confusion : you cannot tell the tendency and design of each separate event, and were I not to explain it, you never could get at the result of the whole. But look at that crown of glory, that robe of light, that seat in heaven, that endless career of felicity, which awaits the believer beyond the grave ; there is the result : and you are to depend upon my wisdom and power for the production of that result : all things are working together for good."

I have considered, then, under this head of discourse, the end to be accomplished by God ; the means by which that end is to be effected ; the working together, under the divine direction, of all the dispensations of Providence, and all the events that occur in this world : and now I come just briefly to speak of *the certainty with which we may calculate upon the production of this end by these means.* " *We know.*" It is not a mere conjecture ; it is not an opinion ; it is a declaration of absolute certainty. In cases where much is at stake, a high degree of probability is thought much of ; how much more absolute certainty. We have the promise of a God that cannot lie ; and we have the power of a God who can do all things that he wills to accomplish his promise. It were easier for a man that reflects to plunge into absolute atheism at once, than to doubt the truth of this declaration. God has spoken it ; it must be true. It were easier to believe that there is no God at all, than believe that that God can be false : easier to believe there is no God at all, than that there is a God of limited power. Confident, therefore, in the judgment of infinite wisdom and unlimited power, we may rest with absolute security upon the accomplishment of this object.

But I now go on to deduce several inferences from this subject. And, in the first place, I infer, that *what is true in reference to the individual Christian, must, of course, be true in reference to the Church at large.* If all things are concurring to establish the welfare of each individual that belongs to the Church of Christ, then, of course, all the events of Providence must be concurring to promote the welfare of the Church at large. Yes, my brethren, the expression, the exulting and delightful expression, of the Apostle, in his epistle to the Ephesians, is quite correct : " Jesus Christ is exalted to be head over all things to his church." All principalities and powers are put in subjection to him, that he might accomplish the purpose for which he died upon the cross, to redeem to himself out of every kindred, and people, and tongue, a multitude which no man can number. All the events that are transpiring are under the guidance of infinite wisdom, and the direction of infinite power. God is gathering up into his own purposes all the influences of separate events and combining these influences for the production of his own benevolent purposes. The rise and fall of empires, the setting up and the pulling down

of monarchies, the progress of arms, of commerce, of arts, the collision of human passions and human interests that is perpetually going forward—all these things are working together for good to the Christian.

We speak of providence and of grace as of two separate dispensations; in fact they are but one. The cross is the centre of God's moral government: every thing emanates from this centre, or bears upon it. We learn this from the language of Jesus Christ. "As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." We are often puzzled and perplexed in surveying the course of events. The stream of human history seems to be rolling onward with many involutions, and often appears to be rolling back upon its source: but it is ever moving onward, impelled by a power which it cannot but obey, to that point in the history of the world, of which it is said in Scripture, "The knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the channels of the deep." Brethren, with the pages of ecclesiastical history open before us, we have a fair picture, that will prove to us that what the Scriptures say on this matter is true. Some of the darkest times that have occurred in the history of God's chosen people, have been ultimately overruled for the production of good to the Church. Oftentimes we stand asking the questions "why" and "wherefore," and no voice returns an answer, until we come to the Scriptures, and there we are told, that though it is not within the province of our reason to know the design of each separate event, yet, we are informed, that ultimately all things work together for good.

It is impossible, brethren, to look around upon the present state of the world or of the Church, without sometimes having a rising fear of extreme apprehension, as to what may be in reserve by Divine Providence for this troubled world of ours. We sometimes feel the ground heaving beneath our feet; we sometimes see the dark clouds rising, and rolling, and rumbling along the horizon of our prospect: and we may be ready to ask, "What meaneth this?" We cannot tell what will be the result: but standing upon the mount of prophecy, we see whither all is tending, and where all will ultimately end—in the welfare of the Church.

In the second place, I infer, *the unspeakable value of that Sacred Volume which contains such a discovery as this.* Who could have made it but God himself? What have all the inventions of art, the discoveries of science, the conjectures of philosophy, done for the human race, in the way of making them either holy or happy, compared with this one thing—the Inspired Volume? My brethren, who that looks abroad upon the chequered scene of human affairs, can presume to tell whether good or evil preponderates? Has this not been a question thrown out, which few have had the temerity to imagine they can solve? And even if they could advance so far as to pronounce a decision, that good now preponderates, yet who, without some infallible oracle to determine the question, can declare whether ultimately good or evil will prevail? The question that reason asks is this, and this is the question that reason cannot solve: "If favourites, why so much suffering? If criminals, why so much enjoyment?" But the Bible comes in, and sets the matter for ever at rest, and tells us that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to his purpose." Nay, without the Bible who can tell us what *good* is, or how it is to be obtained? Never was there a term that has been so generally used, so ignorantly used, as the term "*good*".

It has been the subject of a thousand treatises ; though the wise men of the earth have been puzzled to discover, and the skill of the greatest and wisest of human men have endeavoured to fathom the question, "What is good ; where is it to be found?" they have been unable to fathom it. A learned heathen tells us that in his time there were no less than two hundred and thirty opinions as to what constituted the chief good ; a plain proof that they needed a superior wisdom to inform them what good is, and how obtained. The Bible settles the question, and tells us, that the chief good is the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory ; and that all this troubled and chequered scene is concurring with God's merciful purposes, to put his people into final possession of this good.

O my brethren, what more than heavenly music is the text, to

"Th' afflicted in this vale of tears,  
The place of sorrows, sighs, and fears!"

O what more than heavenly music is it, amid all the scenes and the complaints that he is ever prone to, to hear all things are working together for good to him! If we could conceive, that to-day for the first time we had heard of this declaration, if this had been the chosen scene where God would lay open to us the secrets of his government, and intentions of his providence ; if we were brought up to the house of God this morning, to have the keys of the mystery put into our hands, and it had been my commission to proclaim to you that all things were working together for our good, would it be heard with listlessness or carelessness by the parties interested ? My brethren, in the case that I have here supposed, would not the tear that was glistening in the eye forget to fall ; would not the half-uttered groan have been suppressed, and every man, every Christian man, been truly ashamed to sigh or weep, when he was told that God intended that all things should work together for his good? Why, brethren, is it less true, is it less interesting, now that it is told you for the thousandth time, that all things, under the wisdom and power of God, are concurring for the production of your spiritual benefit? Let the believer who has come this morning to the house of God, and left his harp hanging upon the willow, clasp the Bible upon his bosom, and go back to his scene of suffering, dark and dreary though it be, and take down that harp, and strike it afresh, in praise of Him who has condescended, not only to tell him that he intended ultimately to save his soul, but that all that is now painful and unpleasant enters into the accomplishment of that great design.

In the third place, we learn *the necessity of faith, to rise to the standard of our privileges, and receive that abundance of consolation which God has provided for us.* My brethren, do you believe this? What, and go sorrowing all your days because of the afflictions with which God may see fit to chasten you ! In temporal things do we often feel an objection to give up a present for a future and greater advantage ? Is not the man counted unwise who would not, for the present, surrender a small portion of his property, to secure ten times the amount for it at the distance of ten years ? And does he weep when he parts with his property ; does he mourn as if he had been called to endure affliction, when he has an entire confidence in the adventure, that it will ultimately succeed according to the representations that have been made to him ? And shall we, when called by Divine Providence to give up present comfort, present enjoyments, present possessions, with the infallible assurance that it shall be productive of welfare in another world, shall we stop back ? Shall we

consider ourselves hardly dealt with, as having an extraordinary pressure to bear, and refuse to trust God, and count all for our spiritual benefit? Whence comes this, but from want of faith in the gracious promises of God? We suffer for our folly; and therefore the great object which we all should have in view should be, to bring up our minds in the exercise of faith to the standard of our privileges, and the abundance of consolation which God has provided us in his Word. We have all much want of faith in believing it. It is easy when all things run smooth to assent to this truth: but when we have nothing but God's simple Word to trust to, then is the time for the exercise and the trial of faith. Now I say, that in all these perplexing circumstances in which believers are placed, they have nothing but God's word to secure them; but they have that word, and in that word let them repose.

Fourthly, we learn from this subject *the certainty of the perseverance of the saints*. It is God's purpose to make all things concur for their spiritual benefit; it is his purpose to bring them to everlasting life and glory. What can we say more?

Lastly, the subject calls upon us all *to examine ourselves, and see whether the marks of this character are to be found in us*: if not, the privilege does not belong to us. No man ought to take this consolation to himself but on the sure ground of Jesus Christ. Now let me beseech you to ask the question of yourselves, Do you love God? Let each respond, "Do I?" and let conscience give the answer. You are not to ask the question, "Am I included in the decree?" You have nothing to do with it. God's decree is never submitted for human inspection: that volume no eye but his own is able to look into. But where there is the decree to purpose the salvation of an individual, there is a copy written upon the heart of him who is the subject of it by effectual calling, in the principle of supreme practical love to God. You cannot ascend into heaven to search that inscrutable volume of God's decrees, but you can look into your own heart, and see whether you love God. As an old divine has said, "Prove your calling, and never doubt of your election."

If you have not this character, the privilege never belonged to you, but the very opposite: for while all things work together for good to them that love God, all things work together for ill to them that love not God. Prosperity and adversity, comfort and affliction; all your social enjoyments, all your individual gratifications, through the power of your unbelief, will, if you reject the Gospel—aye, even the Gospel itself, and all the external advantages of religion—work together for your future condemnation: they will become a savour of death unto death. Every sabbath, every sermon, every prayer, every admonition of friends, every check of conscience that is whispered—adds something to your condemnation; not, indeed, by its own inherent tendency, but by the use you make of them. You have abused them, and you are guilty of the abuse; and they will add something to your guilt and your condemnation hereafter.

God in mercy grant, that these considerations may make their impression upon your mind; and that this day, and from this hour, may you solicit the Holy Spirit to enlighten that dark mind, to change that hard heart, to put you among the number of those that love God, and then you may take to yourselves the rich and unutterable consolation of the text: "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

## ENTERING INTO THE SANCTUARIES OF GOD.

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REV. W. DODSWORTH, A.M.

MARGARET CHAPEL, MARGARET STREET, AUGUST 16, 1835.

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"When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; until I went into the sanctuary of God."—PSALM lxxiii. 16, 17.

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THAT we live in a world, and under a dispensation of things, which present many difficulties and perplexities to the natural reason of man, is what every intelligent and reflecting mind must admit. There is much every day occurring around us which we cannot account for. We behold effects, perhaps we can trace them a step or two in their immediate causation, but on closer examination we find again, that these are but the effects of causes still more remote, and these so subtle, and so involved in obscurity, as to elude our closest investigation. The deeper the research, the greater the difficulties that present themselves; the more we know the more we see there is yet to know: the further we trace finite things, the further we see ourselves from the infinite.

We may feel humbled and pained at such discoveries, my brethren, but a little reflection might convince us, that these limits must be imposed upon our inquiries: we are under a plan and dispensation of things which is of God's devising; a plan reaching far higher, and descending far lower, than we can embrace within the compass of our limited faculties. We are as men engaged in the field of battle, moved hither and thither at the command of the general. To us, perhaps, engaged within our own limited sphere, the movements may seem perplexing, and perhaps even disadvantageous. So, perhaps, they would be if viewed alone; but they form but a part of the great design in the mind of Him who directs and controls the whole. We are as men very close to some beautiful and magnificent building, and we can see but a single pillar, or a single ornament, which seems to us perhaps monstrous, and without symmetry or proportion: another sees it from a point at which he can take the whole structure into view, and it comes forth in all its symmetry, and proportion, and beauty: and those parts which seemed unsightly and disproportionate, are now seen to conduce to the perfection of the building.

But why should we seek for similitudes. Hear the word of the Lord by the Prophet Isaiah: "Have ye not known? have ye not heard? hath it not been told you from the beginning? have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in." If we consider the magnitude of his plans, and the extensiveness of his purposes, we shall feel ourselves to be

as mere passengers, a moment here, and then gone ; and after our utmost and most diligent search into his designs, we shall conclude with Job, “ Lo, these are parts of his ways : but how little a portion is heard of him ? ” Happy had it been for men if they had ever acted under these just impressions. What folly had it then seemed, as well as impiety, for man, the creature of an hour, and crushed before the moth, to find objection against the character and the revelation, nay, in his presumption, even against the very being of God, from his limited experience, and his very slight and contracted observation ! How more than ridiculous it would seem to rest upon conclusions derived from premises such as these ! How fatal all those objections drawn from the exceedingly partial and limited view which we can take of the plans and purposes of God, or of his works and ways in nature or in providence. As if we could judge of the whole chain of events, their origin, their use, and their end, while we are unable to see more than a single link in the chain.

And not only have infidels and sceptics acted under the oversight and in defiance of this truth—not only have they acted from a want of consideration of the immense distance between man and God, and of the incapacity of the one to judge of the works and ways of the other ; but the servants of God themselves have been too often unmindful of the same thing. They have been tempted to murmur against God’s dispensations ; to judge of them by what they see and hear, to suffer their minds to be perplexed by the seeming difficulties of them. Such was the case with the Psalmist, as we gather from this Psalm out of which the text is taken. It describes a long struggle in his mind between nature and grace ; in which the latter indeed proves victorious, but not without being severely tried. “ But as for me,” says he, “ my feet were almost gone ; my steps had well nigh slipped.” The temptation which gave rise to this struggle was the seeing wealth and power in the hands of the wicked, while the servants of God were exposed to suffering and oppressed with poverty. “ For I was envious at the foolish,” he says, “ when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For there are no bands in their death : but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men ; neither are they plagued like other men.” And then, after describing the pride and loftiness of spirit that prosperity engenders in the human heart, and the wicked making it instrumental even to encourage their infidelity, he proceeds, in the twelfth verse, to describe the effect which this had upon his own mind : “ Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world ; they increase in riches. Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning.” On reflection, however, he checks himself, and reprobates the impiety of the thought : “ If I say, I will speak thus ; behold, I should offend against the generation of thy children.”

In order to understand the force of this temptation in the Psalmist’s case, we must bear in mind, that the dispensation under which he lived was one of temporal rewards and punishments. It would scarcely meet his temptation to have suggested, that there is a future state in which all inequalities shall have been rectified under a perfect system of divine government : because even now, in this present world, an Israelite was led to expect, that his prosperity would be in proportion to his obedience to the law of God. To the Christian this peculiar temptation which occasioned so great a struggle to the Psalmist, can

scarcely be felt to be so powerful an one. We live under a dispensation expressly addressed to our faith, and not to our senses. The Gospel does not lead us to expect, that a strict retribution for good and evil should be manifested here. Such a retribution does, indeed, to a great extent, doubtless, exist even in this present state: but it is not now manifest; we walk not by sight, but by faith. Faith enables the Christian to rise above the world; though its gifts may be denied to him, he can fill his heart with peace and joy under the deepest deprivations to his senses.

But although the Christian is not treated precisely as the Psalmist was, yet he has trials at least as great, and these of a character so far analogous or resembling those of the Psalmist, that he may certainly profit by his example. What was his resource under the trial that oppressed him? He tells us in the text: "When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; until I went into the sanctuary of God." Some have interpreted this of the Psalmist uniting in the temple worship, and finding a satisfaction to his soul, in communion with God and his ordinances.

But although this may be included, the meaning I conceive to be far more comprehensive. The word rendered "sanctuary" is in the plural, "the *sanctuaries* of God," and expresses, as I conceive, the holy mind and intention of God. The meaning of the Psalmist, therefore, I understand to be this: "So long as I endeavoured to comprehend these dispensations by human reason, and by the mere exercise of the powers of the human mind, I found it impossible to comprehend them. They seemed surrounded with difficulties, and involved in inextricable perplexities. But when I called in divine light to my aid; when I threw myself, as it were, into the mind of God, when I endeavoured to look upon them with the eye of God, then all became clear and palpable unto me." The difficulty of the Psalmist was solved by considering the end of the ungodly. If God permitted them to enjoy a temporary prosperity, it was that their fall might be more terrible in itself, and more signally displayed: "Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedest them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors. As a dream when one awaketh; so, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image."

The point, then, which I wish more especially to press upon your minds is this: that the great means of solving the difficulties with which our Christian path is surrounded, and which may from time to time perplex us in our course, is to enter into the sanctuaries of God; that is, to draw ourselves as much as possible into the divine mind; to look at all things as far as it is permitted to us, from the point from which God views them; to see them in connexion with his revealed plans and purposes. Then will light break forth in our obscurity, and our darkness, however intense it be, shall become as noon-day.

Let me now, then, refer to a few of the topics which are apt to perplex the mind, merely as specimens of this subject. Take, for instance, *the entrance of evil into the world, and its vast progress*. It must be admitted that this subject may be presented to the mind in a way which is very perplexing. God is infinite in power, as well as perfect in goodness and holiness. All things are seen by him; therefore he could not be taken by surprise: all things are under his absolute control; therefore he could not want resources for the prevention of evil. To say that man was free to fall as well as free to

stand, and that it was a service of perfect freedom that God required of him—this, though an important feature in the case, does not reach the root of the difficulty : for why might not those inducements have been placed before the eye of man, together with the absence of all external temptation, which should ever have led him to be willing and obedient to his Creator ? So human reason might argue, and perplex itself, and find no end, “ in wandering mazes lost.”

But enter into the sanctuaries of God : endeavour to look upon this with the mind of God, and in reference to the plans of God. I do not say that all difficulties are solved ; there are difficulties in connexion with this subject, which the human mind in the present state can never overcome, can never, at least, fully solve ; but assuredly all difficulty is in one sense overcome. We see how the entrance of evil has served as the occasion for more extensive good. We look at sin in connexion with grace : we see mercy growing out of transgression, and we see the guilt of our race affording opportunity for the most wondrous display of love. That is, we see, through the means of the entrance of sin and misery into our world, a most wondrous display of attributes, which otherwise would ever have been hid from us. For though we might imagine, perhaps, God giving his Son to exalt to a higher condition an un-sinning race of creatures—as indeed even the elect angels it would appear, from some passages of Scripture, are not uninterested in the work of Christ—yet it is the sin of man, that sin which brought the Son of God to agony and shame, that sin which made not only the gift of Christ necessary, but made his obedience unto death, even the death of the cross, the shameful and ignominious death of the cross : it is this sin which has furnished occasion for the utmost demonstration of divine love. We look at sin, then, not in itself, but in connexion with redeeming love : we discuss its entrance into the world, not in dry, abstract reasoning, but as connected with the plans and purposes of God. We enter into his sanctuary, into those secrets of his mercy and love, which he has revealed to us ; and I say, not that all ground of difficulty is removed, but I do say that every objection is silenced ; that the becoming and reasonable attitude of the mind is shewn to be not one of cavilling and rejection, but of wonder and adoration. Though we cannot see the end of the golden chain of God’s dealings with us, we can see enough of it to discern that it tends to heaven. Some, perhaps, will say, “ This, then, it would seem might reconcile us to sin ; why then should God blame and punish it, since it has been so instrumental in the setting forth of his glory, and to the good of his creatures ? ” Such an objector St. Paul found in his day ; and we are safest, therefore, in giving his reply : “ Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault ? For who hath resisted his will ? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God ? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus ? ”

But another perplexity which may lie across our path, is one which immediately arises out of that just noticed, namely, *a creation made subject to vanity ; brought into a state of suffering through sin*. The mere philanthropist finds here what he esteems an insuperable difficulty. It must be admitted, that on the surface of things, appearances are against the conviction, that God wills only the happiness of his creatures. Amidst the thousand features of goodness and love which are stamped on the face of creation, the eye rests with pain on this one feature apparently of an opposite character ; and when we think to

know this, it seems too painful for us. But enter into the sanctuaries of God ; enter into the mind of God ; pursue his revealed purposes—and you will see, that however mysterious and extensive the existence of suffering may be, it is no evidence of a want of love : “ In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.” God “ spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all.”

I would here insist not more on the fact that God gave his Son to save sinners, I would not merely balance this act of his love towards us against any opposite appearances ; but the point which I would insist upon is this, that God’s own Son was himself a sufferer, nay, pre-eminently a sufferer, a “ man of sorrows and acquainted with grief ;” that none suffered as Christ suffered. Now this answers every difficulty. When we see around us the whole creation groaning and travailing in pain together until now, when we look at the throes of nature, struggling to bring forth, and in vain ; when we see the curse attaching to every blessing (for what is there that hath not come under the curse ?) and when we see the way to be passed through before any joy can be reached, our hearts might indeed misgive us, and we might doubt whether God loved a world in which so much misery has found entrance. But when we look on Christ, when we see him groaning under the infirmities of our nature ; and still more when we see him sinking under the judicial consequences of our sin, when we see that ere he could reach the joy that was set before him, he must endure the cross and the shame, our doubts are dissipated, and our misgivings cease ; at least they ought to be dissipated and they ought to cease. For who is the sufferer ? Who is it on whom God has laid the heavy rod ? Whose back is it that is torn with scourges, and his face more marred than the face of any man ? It is the only begotten Son of God ; it is the Son of the Father’s bosom ; it is the only Beloved One : and can we doubt that God loves him ? Can we doubt that there was a “ needs be ” for the suffering of those whom God yet unutterably loves ? If the sufferings of Christ were no evidence of God’s want of love to him, so neither can the sufferings of any creature be an evidence of God’s want of love to that creature.

Once more, I would observe, that there is, I suppose in every Christian’s individual experience, *much that is not only painful to his feelings, but exceedingly perplexing to his judgment, and this not merely his natural judgment, but even his spiritual judgment.* Often, perhaps, events occur, which seem not only adverse to his temporal prosperity (that is not so difficult to him to account for, he knows too much of our fallen nature not to feel, that disappointment in earthly things may be what he most needs—it is easy, comparatively speaking, to submit to this)—but there are events which seem most adverse to his spiritual advantage. There are events which seem to thwart him in the pursuit of God, to oppose what he knows ought to be encouraged ; and when he looks abroad he sees many difficulties which the church has to contend with ; much oppression, much exposure, not only to the persecution from without, but to the subtlety of the adversary. He searches in vain for a reason for these things. He knows that Providence governs the world ; that God peculiarly takes care of his Church, which is dear to him ; but reason is truly baffled in its efforts to pursue the train of events, and see the end of them.

Now I cannot shew how the entering into the sanctuary of God removes the

stumbling-block, and shews us wisdom and love inscribed on what seemed to be darkness and perplexity ; I cannot shew this, because the cases are too numerous and too diversified to admit of any general observation to suit them all. But I will venture to assert, as most agreeable to the experience of every servant of God, that this is a remedy for the evil, and that every believer who really tries it will find it so—that the more he labours to see all things in the light of God, the more he succeeds in throwing himself into the mind of God ; the more enlarged view which he takes of the dispensations of God—in a word, in the comprehensive language of the text, the more he “enters into the sanctuaries of God,” the more he will find his doubts diminish and his perplexities yield ; the more satisfied he will be, that notwithstanding every appearance to the contrary, God is keeping his feet ; that the Lord is leading him by the hand, is guiding every step of his course, ruling him prudently with all his power. Many things may be perplexing to reason that will become more obvious when viewed in the light of God, when connected with other things too remote, perhaps, to be much discovered, but which shall be revealed unto him who patiently waits upon God.

Let me conclude with one or two observations on *the mode of entering into God's sanctuaries*.

A point of the first importance is, *diligently and intently to contemplate the character and the mind of God*, as they are revealed in the person of Jesus Christ. It is by the contemplation of these that we grow into their likeness, and of course assimilate our judgment of things to the judgment of God. It is most worthy of remark, though often overlooked, I think, how much the apostles in their writings dwell on the person of Christ ; how, when they speak of him, they seem to touch a theme on which they delight to dwell. How constantly they place him and his work before us as the objects of contemplation. And much of this, too, do we find in the services of our Church ; she seems here very closely to have copied the apostolic method. Now our temptation is, and I think it a temptation peculiar to the present day, too much to dwell on our own individual wants, and to make the expression of them the chief subject in our religious exercises. If, then, our religion assumes a too selfish character (for there may be selfishness even in religion), and we perhaps insensibly glide into a subtle species of self-sufficiency, depending upon our own judgment for what we think most needful for us, our prayers are not sufficiently submissive, not sufficiently formed on the model of God's mind, as it is presented to us in the walk and in the person of Jesus Christ.

Let me entreat you then, beloved brethren, as most conducive to your spiritual progress, to cultivate immediately this habit of divine meditation. Enter into the sanctuaries of God ; make this the end and object of your lives ; study his mind. Let not your religion consist in the feeling of your wants, and in the continued expression of them, but labour to rise into the mind of God ; looking off, not only from the world, but looking off even from ourselves : yea, I would say, looking off often from your own spiritual wants ; looking off from all things unto Jesus Christ. Endeavour to realize his character ; to make yourselves, so far as may be, masters of it ; to consider how he would have acted in such and such circumstances. This is not to be learned in an hour, or in a day ; it demands, as well as deserves, the study of a life. And strive to judge of all things as Christ would judge of them. Accustom yourselves to consider every

question and every event under this aspect ; " How would Christ judge of it ; and how would he act in respect of it ? What would be its effect upon his mind ? " So you will enter into the sanctuaries of God.

Need I add, *be diligent in the use of those means which tend to promote such intercourse with God.* Although I do not think, as I have already observed, that the text can fairly be interpreted with respect to application to public worship, and the ordinances of God's house, yet surely we may apply it strictly to the keeping up a perpetual communion with God. Whatever men may be told, if they are living in the neglect of these things, they are not living in communion with God. Any thing which tends to bring us nearer to God, must help to remove those difficulties which have come upon us, as all our difficulties have come upon us through alienation from him. It is only by our minds being estranged from his mind that we find any difficulty at all.

And here, beloved brethren, in this house, and indeed wherever two or three are gathered together in his name, there the Saviour has promised especially to be with them, yea, to be in them. Here he makes himself known to us in the breaking of bread ; at this table we eat his flesh, and we drink his blood : we dwell in him, and he in us : we are one with him and he with us. Here peculiarly we may be said to enter into the sanctuary of God : here we discover his character, here we read his mind, and here, through grace, **we grow into his image.**

## THE TRIUNE JEHOVAH.

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REV. J. R. BARBER, A.M.

ST. PAUL'S EPISCOPAL CHAPEL, VAUXHALL, TRINITY SUNDAY, 1832.

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" Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord."—DEUTERONOMY, vi. 4.

אָנָי יְהוָה תְּהִלָּתִי—ISAIAH, xlvi. 8.

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MAN is ever prone to err, and in nothing more so than in those things which concern his everlasting interests ; prone to err by running into the most opposite extremes. The descendants of Noah, after they had been scattered abroad upon the face of the earth, perverted their way, forsook their God, and formed to themselves imaginary deities. The grand error of that age was denying the unity of the Deity ; the grand error of the present day is, denying the Trinity : both errors spring from the same source, the fruitful source of unnumbered evils—the pride of man ; who in his folly attempts to grasp infinity, to comprehend the Deity. The Almighty has graciously been pleased to reveal himself to us as a God of justice, a God of holiness, a God of love. Alas ! how absurd in fallen man to reject any part of that revelation, because his faculties are not sufficient to comprehend the whole. Man is indeed the highest link in the long chain of terrestrial creation. He is indebted to the goodness of the Supreme Being for his elevation as lord of this lower world ; but he is as much beneath the lowest of the heavenly host, as the worm that crawls beneath his feet is inferior to man : and with as much propriety might the creeping reptile deny the superior powers of man, or endeavour to explain his existence. No ; the truth of Scripture is clear : " The world by wisdom knew not God :" As he is revealed let us receive him, and say with humble faith,

" Almighty Father ! own me as thy child,  
And bid me own thee with a filial cry.  
In thee, Jehovah-Jesus, I confide,  
The Father's equal—and the sinner's friend.  
And Thee, Eternal Spirit, I adore,  
My Sanctifier, Comforter, and Guide.  
A triune God, distinct in persons, yet  
In essence One Incomprehensible !  
O, who by searching with the glimmering spark  
Of reason, finds out God ? or who  
With finite mind can scan Infinity ?  
Sooner the feeble moth might mountains weigh,  
And bear the globe upon his tinsel wing,  
Than mortal man, with all his boasted powers,  
Could comprehend the self-existent God.

Proud Reason ! bow thy lofty, impious crest,  
Nor dare attempt the height whence angels fell !  
God has revealed himself in Holy Writ,  
The Father, Son, and Spirit, Three in One."

Let us adore God in all his ways, and worship him as Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabaoth.

" Hear, O Israel, יְהוָה the Lord, אֱלֹהֵינוּ our God, is one Lord." The Israelites, when these words were declared to them, had just left Egypt. They had witnessed the idolatry of that superstitious nation ; they had seen the wonders which Jehovah had shewn there, the punishments he had inflicted upon their king because he had said, " Who is the Lord that I should serve him ? I know not the Lord." And therefore they were commanded not to follow such an example, lest they should experience a similar punishment. " Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord." The chief point in all our religious inquiries should be to discover what God is. His nature, his attributes, his perfections must be known, in order that we may serve him as we ought, and love him as we are bound : for we cannot serve him whom we know not ; we cannot love him whom we will not serve. Therefore, hear, O Israel—whether Jew or Greek, whether bond or free—the Lord our God is one Lord.

In this passage of Holy Writ we have at the same time the unity and the personality of the ever-blessed Trinity clearly revealed to us ; and we are led to adore and wonder.

Hear, O Israel ; יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה | אֶחָד Jehovah, our Elohim, is one Jehovah. Here we have the unity : here we have the personality : here we have the self-existence : here we have the covenant of Jehovah—יְהוָה אֶחָד : one Jehovah—or a united, self-existent being, who was, who is, and who is to come, throughout the countless ages of eternity—from eternity to eternity. And with this unity is connected the word or name אֱלֹהִים which being plural, contains within it the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים Jehovah, Elohim, one Jehovah.

And if we examine the Scripture as we ought to do, as the revelation of the Almighty, we shall find that every part of it attests this great truth. Thus the prophet Isaiah, lxiv. 8\*, says, וַעֲתָה יְהוָה אָבִינוּ " And now, O Jehovah, thou art our Father." The same prophet who thus declares Jehovah to be Father in chap. xlvi. 21, ascribes the same to the Son. " There is no Elohim beside me, אֵל-צְדִיק וּמֹשִׁיעַ a just God and a Saviour. And the same incommunicable name is given to the Spirit in chapter xi. 2 וְנַחַת עֲלֵינוּ רוח יְהוָה " And there shall rest upon him the Spirit of Jehovah." Thus the personality of the divine trine, and the unity of the divine persons, are both clearly expressed by the words, יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים the Lord God ; and in the places quoted still farther explained.

\* In the Hebrew Bible, lxiv. 7.

To enter, however, into the manner of existence of these divine persons is beyond the stretch of human knowledge. We here know only in part: we are a mystery to ourselves; every morsel we eat, every breath we draw, is a mystery incomprehensible; and how can we comprehend the Almighty? We know we do exist; we know we cannot prolong our own existence, or account for it; we know that in God we live, and move, and have our being. Let us adore him for his goodness, and seek not to be wise above what is written. When we shall see and know even as we are known, it may be permitted us to contemplate the perfection of the Deity, and to know something more of the divine character. Till then let us adore him as our gracious Father, by whom we were created, by whom we are preserved. As our merciful Redeemer, let us place our hopes for eternal happiness upon the atonement which he has made for the sins of the whole world: and as the Spirit of truth, the Comforter, let us implore him to cleanse the thoughts of our hearts, to sanctify and to preserve us in the truth, " Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord."

The divinity of THE FATHER is a point scarcely ever controverted: but though almost universally acknowledged in words, how frequently denied in acts. This has been the case in all ages of the world. When the first-born of woman was called to account for the murder he had committed, he insolently replied, " Am I my brother's keeper?" He had, indeed, by his offering of the fruits of the earth acknowledged him as the proprietor of the universe, but by his refusal to conform to the rites which Jehovah had himself instituted as shadows of something yet to come, he rejected the government of Jehovah, and the means which he had devised, in his infinite wisdom, of justifying. And how did he fall! And so his descendants continued to walk in his steps till it pleased God to purify the earth by a tremendous deluge, which entailed destruction upon the whole human race, eight persons alone excepted. The same rejection of the sovereignty of Jehovah was manifested in the conduct of the Jews. Though they were specially favoured by a peculiar revelation—they had the word of prophecy—to them were the promises; they frequently entirely forsook him, and openly denied him; and even when they drew nigh with the mouth, and worshipped with the lips, the heart was far from him. And, my brethren, may we not say of a truth that it is too frequently the case with *us*, who have not only the law given by Moses, but that grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ? that "sure word of prophecy" whereby we would do well to take heed as unto a light that shineth in a dark place." The Israelites were prone to idolatry; they went after other gods, forgetting that the Lord was their God—that they were betrothed unto him. Let us inquire, Have *we* been mindful that he is *our* God? Have *we* remembered that he requires *our* heart? He has called *us* into being; he holds his protecting hand over *us*; he sustains and supports *us*; he causes his sun to shine upon *us*; he gives *us* rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling *our* hearts with joy and gladness: and let us remember that, whether *we* be rich or whether *we* be poor here below, it avails *us* little: *we* are in that state in which *our* Father and *our* God has placed *us*; and experience fully proves that wealth cannot purchase happiness. Jehovah, as *our* God and Father, has every claim to *our* worship, to *our* service, to *our* love. But alas, *we* have rebelled against him: *we* have transgressed his holy commands; *we* have set at nought his statutes, *we* have

lost the glorious image in which our first parent was originally created ; we are by nature and by practice sinners, enemies to God by wicked works, and consequently, under the curse denounced against sin. Nor are we able to pay the debt we have incurred. But as God is just, as he is holy, as he is true, the penalty must be rendered, the debt must be paid, before we can be re-admitted to his favour. He has revealed himself as “ a jealous God,” as “ a consuming fire.” How, then, shall we stand before him, or with what shall we present ourselves ? He delighteth not in sacrifice or burnt-offering “ Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or ten thousands of rivers of oil,” seeing the earth is the Lord’s and the fulness thereof ? He has revealed himself as פָּדוֹן נָאֵל the redemption, נָאֵל the Redeemer—the Lord of Hosts. “ Hear, O Israel, Jehovah our Elohim is one Jehovah.”

We have contemplated God, as the God and Father of all, let us now view him as the SON, who gave himself a ransom for all, as Jehovah-Jesus, the Lord our Saviour, God over all, blessed for ever.

In the heathen world there had been gods many, and lords many ; yet even amid the corruptions that obtained in Egypt, in Greece, and in Rome, some trace of the doctrine of a trinity is to be found ; yea, even amid the superstitious idolatry of the devotees of Bramah, this doctrine, as well as the incarnation of their Chrishna, is particularly to be noticed—a clear proof of the tradition received from their fathers, though corrupted in the transmission. They worship, indeed, an unknown god, as the Athenians of old did. But we have to bless God that he has revealed himself to us in his Son ; that he has caused the glorious light of the Gospel of peace to shine upon us ; that to us the Sun of Righteousness has arisen with healing in his wings. Unto us a child has been born ; unto us a son has been given.

His divine nature as one of the persons of the Elohim, is written as with a sunbeam in every part of the sacred Scriptures : to which he appealed in his reasoning with the Jews. All things written in the law and the prophets were fulfilled in him. Moses testified of him. David viewed him by the eye of faith and prophesied of him. Isaiah, Daniel, and all the holy prophets, pointed him out. “ Sanctify the Lord of Hosts himself, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread : and he shall be for a sanctuary, but for a stone of stumbling and rock of offence to the two houses of Israel.” These very words are, by St. Peter, in his first Epistle, ii. 7, 8, applied to the Lord Jesus Christ ; and thus prove his divinity, for he is styled יְהוָה צְבָאֹת אֶתְנוֹ—the Lord of Hosts, himself, rejected indeed, and set at nought by the builders, but become the head of the corner—yea, precious to all who believe in him. For “ he came to his own”—those called by his name ; to those with whom he had graciously made a covenant ; to those who had for two thousand years enjoyed the privilege of being the depositaries, the guardians of the oracles of truth, who considered themselves as the peculiar favourites of Jehovah—“ and they received him not : but to as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.” Thus saith the Lord, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the Lord of Hosts : I am the first, and I am the last, and besides me there is no God. This attribute of self-existence and eternal duration, Jesus himself assumes in his final

address to St. John at the close of the Revelation. Again, the same evangelical prophet whom I have already quoted, or rather Jehovah, by the mouth of Isaiah, declares to the Church, " Thy maker is thine husband—the Lord of Hosts is his name, and the Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. the God of the whole earth shall he be called." The Baptist, who was called " the Prophet of the Highest," who went before the face of Jehovah to prepare his way, declares: " He that hath the bride is the bridegroom :" and, as a distinguished writer says, " the Church, which is the bride of Christ, can no more have two husbands than Christ can have two distinct Churches." As the Church is the bride, the body, the building of God ; and as there is one bride, one body, one building of God, so on the other hand, there is one God who is the husband or bridegroom ; one Christ who is the head ; one God with the Lamb who is the light of it. " Kiss the Son, therefore, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, while his anger is kindled yea but a little." His is the only name under heaven given among men, whereby we can be saved. He was called Jesus, because he should save his people from their sins—of which he became the atonement ; yea, for the whole world : and he invites all to come unto him ; he commissions his servants to preach the Gospel, glad tidings of great joy, to every creature. He says by his Prophet, " Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters ; and he that hath no money : come ye, buy and eat ; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." He has sworn with an oath, " As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the sinner, but rather that he turn from his wickedness and live." He says himself in his Gospel, " Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." An inspired writer declares that he is " able and willing to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him, seeing that he ever liveth to make intercession for them." And at the close of the canon it is said, " Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely."

Accept the invitation, then. Incline your ear and come unto him : hear and your soul shall live. The law condemns you : it declares, " Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." But " if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous : and he is the propitiation for our sins ; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." " His blood cleanseth from all sin." None need, therefore, despair : he rejecteth none but such as reject him. Receive the offers of his mercy, the offers of his pardon, which he has purchased for you by his most precious blood : He will then be unto you wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption ; and you will be enabled by this, and by this alone, to look forward with confidence to that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ. " Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord."

We have seen the personality and divinity of the Father and the Son, our Elohim, our covenant Elohim, our **נָשָׁה** our Redeemer. Proceed we now to the third person in this blessed Trinity, THE HOLY SPIRIT, which, as an apostle says, " dwelleth in us unless we be reprobates." In the first lesson for this morning service we read, that " in the beginning the Elohim created

the heavens and the earth," and that **וּרוֹחַ אֱלֹהִים מְרֻחֶפֶת** "the Spirit of the Elohim moved," or rather caused a gentle, tremulous motion "upon the face of the waters." By the same Spirit he garnished the heavens. As the office of *creation* is attributed to the Father, and *redemption* to the Son, so *sanctification* is the peculiar office of the Holy Spirit. Still, however, as a Trinity in unity, as a united Elohim, we find all these works and offices attributed to each. Of the Son it is said that "all things were created by him and for him," and "without him was not any thing made that was made." And Job declares, "The Spirit of God hath made me." Our blessed Redeemer prays to his heavenly Father that he would *sanctify* his disciples. St. Paul, writing to the Corinthians, addresses them as "those who are *sanctified* in Christ Jesus." And the same Apostle, writing to the Romans, speaks of "the grace that was given him of God, that he should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the Gospel of God; that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being *sanctified* by the Holy Ghost." And we ourselves are in the constant habit of invoking every person of the Trinity for spiritual blessings, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost be with you all. And St. Paul, writing to Timothy, unites the Father and the Son in his invocation of blessing upon this bishop of Ephesus: "To Timothy, my dearly beloved son; grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." Hence, then, for all the blessings of creation, providence, and redemption, we are indebted to Jehovah our Elohim, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; in whose name we have been baptized, whose blessings we invoke.

Nor is this doctrine or this invocation of blessings peculiar to the Christian Church, to the Israel of the new covenant: the Jews of old acknowledged the same. If you refer to Numbers, vi. at the close of the chapter, you will find that "the Lord spake unto Moses saying, Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, On this wise, ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: the Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace." And this form of benediction, commanded by Jehovah himself, and pronounced by the high-priest upon the children of Israel, is in every respect analogous to the Christian blessing, and to the divine offices of the Trinity. Thus, "Jehovah bless thee and keep thee," corresponds with the office of the Father, the Author of blessing, the God of providence and preservation. "Jehovah make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee." "Grace and truth," says St. John, "came by Jesus Christ." By him we are illuminated; by him, even the Son, we have "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." "Jehovah lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace." The office of the Spirit is to give peace. He is the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, whose best, whose first, whose choicest fruit is peace.

Hear, therefore, O Christian Israel, Jehovah our Elohim—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—is one Jehovah; three persons, and one God. And it is worthy of particular attention that, as the word "Jehovah," signifying the self-existence of the Supreme Being, and invariably applied to him alone,

(yea, so tenacious are the Jews that they never pronounce it, lest they should take the incommunicable name in vain) has no plural; so the other word which expresses the covenanting of the Deity is in the plural; fully confirming the Trinity in unity. " Hear, therefore, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love Jehovah, Elohim, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." All men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father: and an Apostle says, " Grieve not the Holy Spirit, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."

These, my brethren, are the grand truths of our most holy faith, which we in common with the Christian Church this day commemorate; a doctrine, indeed, which is confessedly mysterious, beyond the ken of human knowledge; but not therefore to be rejected, but to be received in humble faith on the truth of God's holy word. May it produce in us more zeal, more love, a stricter conformity to the divine image; that when we have finished our course we may, by the influence of the Holy Spirit, having washed our robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, be received by God the Father. Then will Jehovah be our Elohim, and constitute our glory and crown of rejoicing: and we shall behold and dwell with Him in whose presence is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

## THE NATURE OF SALVATION AND THE MEANS OF ITS ATTAINMENT.

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ST. JOHN'S CHAPEL, BEDFORD ROW, AUGUST 23, 1835\*.

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"Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain."—1 COR. xv. 1, 2.

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THESE verses lie at the commencement of the very powerful and eloquent chapter of this epistle in which St. Paul maintains the doctrine of the body's resurrection. This doctrine had already been impugned: there were those who, with Hymeneus and Philetas, believed that the resurrection was *spiritually* spoken of; was a resurrection only from a state of sin to a state of holiness, and that it was already passed. Others there were who, in the pride of human reason and human philosophy, altogether denied the truth of the future resurrection, but gave man over an entire and unredeemed prey to death, believing that the spiritual, as well as the material portion should find an everlasting sepulchre.

Now, in contradicting both the one and the other opinion, the Apostle maintains that there shall be a future resurrection; that the body shall be redeemed from the dust; that man shall stand forth in all the completeness of his complex being, to receive his everlasting portion. In the close of this epistle he recapitulates what he had already stated: "I declare unto you the Gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand." For although the Corinthian Church was one singularly marked by its disorders, yet upon the authority of the Apostle, we believe it to have been a Christian Church: they had received the Gospel, and they were standing in it.

We propose, in the application of these truths, to speak to you on the subject the most important to human creatures, and which St. Paul, writing, for aught he knew, the last letter he might ever address to his people, chose as his great topic: "By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you."

Now we propose, in the first place, to bring before you the nature of the salvation of the soul; and, in the next place, to speak of the means of its attainment.

**As to the first head of our subject—THE SALVATION OF THE HUMAN SOUL—it**

\* On behalf of the Society for Visiting and Relieving the Indigent Blind.

is in truth that one great topic which may claim for itself the intelligent regardfulness of all creation. It is that which might well fasten down upon its detail all the understanding which God has given to his creatures. And truly do we know, that it is a matter which even the angels in the presence of God desire to look into: that they would stoop from their lofty and holy occupations to trace out the workings of this mighty design of God; because they know that herein his attributes receive their most entire vindication, and here, as it were, is paid unto God the largest revenue of praise and glory. It is the subject on which God's people on earth rejoice to dwell; it is that which shall occupy the enlarged capacities of the redeemed when they are brought within the borders of the kingdom that has been promised to them.

Salvation is the triumph of grace over sin; it is the victory of God over his great enemy; and we can conceive no matter approaching to it in its weight and eternal importance, whether we regard it in its general application or in its individual aspect; whether we consider salvation to mean the recovery of a lost world, the bringing back unto Jehovah a portion, an isolated province, of his empire, restoring it again to himself, that he may be loved, honoured, and glorified therein; or whether we consider the establishment of the divine authority, in the setting up of the influence of divine love in the individual heart, and the rendering back that heart, with all its bright and glorious endowments, and with the exercise of all its precious affections, unto Him who claimeth the exercise both of the one and the other to himself.

Now it is a mighty work, whether to restore a world, or to restore one individual heart. It was a work which could be achieved by no putting forth of creature energy. All the borders of the universe would have been hopelessly sought over, and none should have been found fit for the championship of our race; there was only One who might bind this burden upon himself, God's own dear Son. It was only incarnate Deity who could undertake, and carry forward, and accomplish so mighty and stupendous a work. It was only Jesus who could thus wrestle with the foe, and overcome him, and restore the rebel province to its allegiance and to its loyalty: and it is only Jesus, in all the fulness of his character and his office, on whom the wicked sinner can rest for peace and comfort; for they are found, abundantly found, in him. He is as the well-spring of all spiritual and everlasting good to his chosen ones. Whatsoever there is of blessedness on this earth, it comes to us from Jesus: **He** hath saved his people.

Now it is from sin that he hath saved them, and this in a *three-fold* aspect. They are saved from the *guilt* of sin. His blood is as the cleansing fountain, wherein all their defilements may be washed away. Yes, beloved, we may declare this to you as the blessed message from on high: and we will tell you in our Master's name, that there is not one, however conscious of guilt, however burdened the memory with past transgressions; though days and years have been passing away, bearing testimony to iniquity repeated again and again; though you may have trampled upon divine love, and though you may have rejected all the messages of heaven's mercy, though you may have rebellion chambered in your hearts, and defiance written upon your brow; yet if you will come to Jesus, and if you will ask that the holy and cleansing influences of his blood be upon you; if you be but content to cast away the pridefulness

of your nature, and to fling from you all self-dependence and self-trust ; and if you will wrap yourselves in the robe of his righteousness ; your guilt shall be remembered no more ; but you shall stand as accepted, and as stainless, and as without blemish, in the presence of your reconciled God, as though sin had never tainted your nature, as though defilement had never come into your heart.

He saved his people from the *condemnation* of sin. "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect ? It is God that justifieth ; who is he that condemneth?" The people of the Lord, brought into a close and intimate communion with him ; living upon his fulness, enjoying the imputation of his righteousness, will never have a verdict against them, and will never hear the sentence of their condemnation. The gulf that separated them from God is as it were filled up ; for the Saviour cast into it all the mighty power of his sufferings and his obedience ; and the wall of separation had been pulled down, so that there is now an open way of intercourse between the Creator and his creatures. So far is he now from condemning them, that he suffers not the Accuser to be heard : they are complete in his dear Son ; they stand before him without blame.

But Jesus hath, moreover, delivered them from the *power* of sin. Now of this most blessed deliverance we know nothing till the Lord enlightens the eyes of our understanding, and shews us that our birth state was a state of the bitterest, vilest, and the most debasing thraldom. But from this Jesus sets his people free. And it is a precious declaration of his own Word to them : "Sin shall have no more dominion over you ; ye are not under the law, but under grace." That domination which was set up by the usurper within their hearts has now been put down by Jesus. The slave has had his emancipation ; his fetters have been broken ; his prison-house has been opened ; and he comes forth into the region of light and liberty : he is free. The guilt, the condemnation, and the power of sin, are removed by the mighty working of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now this, you will mark, is spoken of in the Bible, not altogether as a future thing, but as a thing *already* commenced. It is not said, "By which Gospel *ye shall be saved*;" but it is said, "By which also *ye are saved*." Now if salvation, in its final accomplishment and results, was a thing that depended on the changefulness of human opinion, or the fickleness of human design ; then there might be subsequent failure, and the bitterness of disappointment might be consequent upon the fulness of hope. But we have to deal with One who is unchangeably the same—yesterday, to-day, and for ever the same ; over the brightness of whose eternity no cloud of variation has ever passed. The believer is already brought to the enjoyment, the foretaste, of those things which the Saviour bought for him, and which are treasured up for him within the borders of that land where sorrow cannot come. He is already saved : he hath the sure word of promise. He is built upon the faithfulness of the Eternal God : he is resting upon a rock ; and the winds may blow, and the tempest may break on him ; but he knows that his spiritual edifice cannot fall ; for it hath deep and eternal foundations.

Now, the happiness of believers, both in time and in eternity, is in its characteristics the same. It is the presence of Jesus which gladdens him. He

might have all that earth could afford, all that imagination could depict, or the widest wish aspire to ; but it would be as nothing if Christ were not with him. His citizenship is far hence ; he is looking to other things ; his hope and his soul's desire are in eternity. It is just in proportion that Jesus is present, revealing to his soul these bright hopes, that he enjoys present comfort, and peace, and joy ; and it is just as these hopes will be fulfilled by the more largely manifested presence of Jesus, that heaven will be to him a place of perfect and unsullied happiness. O it is not that creation shall be restored to all that it was, and to more than it was ; it is not that the dilapidations of its materials shall be built up ; it is not that earth shall become what it was ere sin blighted, and cursed, and desolated it ; but it is that he is come into a land where the Saviour will be ever present with him, and where he shall see him, with no cloud, and no darkness ever to intercept. To the believer, in the fulness of his faith and in the strength of his hope, heaven is already begun ; and he will look away from his infirmities, and his trials, and his pains ; his hope leaps beyond the dark hills which shut him in, and dwells in heaven itself, and he seems already to catch on his ear the sound of that celestial music, and he seems already to behold its blessed inhabitants, and already to breathe its pure, unburthened air. He is saved : he is able to take to himself, in a personal appropriation, that which Jesus hath done for his Church ; and he is able to say, " It is for me that he died ; it is to purchase my salvation : and every promise that the Father gives it is a gift to me. I have a seat in eternity ; the title-deeds for it are in the Word of God : the charter of my inheritance has been written out by the hand of the Eternal, and hath been signed in the crimson blood of Jesus. Now this it is to enjoy salvation, and to be set free for ever from guilt, and condemnation, and spiritual slavery, to be brought into the circle of God's adoption, to be brought into the household of his dear children, to have bread liberally ministered to us day by day from out of our Father's store-house, to be refreshed on our weary journey, to be maintained by the ever-present Spirit, to have consolation living and dying, because we are Christ's and Christ is God's.

But now we go on, as we proposed, in the second place, to speak of **THE MEANS BY WHICH THIS SALVATION IS ATTAINED.** " By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you." The subject of Paul's preaching we have in the following verses : " I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures ; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures." Now there is no salvation without the acceptance of Gospel truth ; and for the acceptance of Gospel truth preaching is God's appointed means. It is the instrument that he has chosen to select for the evangelization of the world.

Now the great subject of the Apostle's preaching was the *death* of Christ : and in exact proportion as that becomes the main topic in the ministry of any Church, that Church will be established and will be built up, and will subsist to the glory of God. In exact proportion, too, in which this great topic is ever presented, in one or other of its aspects, to the mind of an individual believer, there will be peace, and joy, and comfort. We affirm, broadly and

plainly, that there can be little consolation for the wounded conscience, except in the contemplation of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ; and there it is abundantly and unfailingly furnished. Do we feel the burden of our guilt pressing upon us? We can remember that Christ hath taken it upon himself; that burden that would have crushed the creature is laid upon the Incarnate Creator. Do we feel that the very holiness and happiness of God are what shuts us out from communion with him? We remember Jesus came to bring reconciliation with the Father. Do we feel that there are sore afflictions before us? Jesus has contended with our foe: he has won the victory for himself and for his people: he has trampled his own enemy and their enemy under his feet: and therefore we fear not, for we are fighting under the banner of a most resistless Captain. Does pain press upon us? Is there the weary hour of sleepless night, agony and mortal anguish appointed? O! what is this to the anguish and the agony which the Saviour bore, when his body was lacerated with the scourge, and when he hung upon the tree, an object of execration to a malignant multitude? Do we feel that which is a more painful visitation than any bodily affliction—do we feel the sadness of a temporary separation from God? O, even in the depths of that spiritual calamity we cannot appreciate what the Saviour endured when he exclaimed, “ My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” When we remember that all this endurance was for us, that all this bitterness was tasted for us—that it was for us, and such as we, that Jesus bled, and agonized, and died, then can we take comfort; and in the midst of pain, and trial, and temptation, and affliction, and agony, and death, we can rejoice, for Jesus has died for us.

But there is the other topic which the Apostle opens. It is not enough to tell you concerning the death of Jesus; we must tell you also, that he *rose again* for our justification. He went down into the grave, as it were, to fetch thence bright and glorious promises of immortality. Thus as on a rock was to be built the hope of the Church for ever. When Jesus was crucified it was as the representative of his people: when he went down into the grave, it was in their behalf: and when he rose, bringing life and immortality to light, it may be said the Church itself was rising from its entombment.

Here, then, is the complete Gospel dealt out to you: God's dying for sin—God's rising to secure immortality. In a word, this is the Gospel; it is the concentration of all divine compassion; it is the message which the Lord sends to his creatures, a message of comfort to the miserable, the defiled, the ruined, the apostate.

Now the Gospel comes to us, and shews to us what we are by nature; it opens all the naked anatomy of the human heart; it traces back all the streams of human corruption to the fountain, in the tainted and sin-defiled nature. It points the arrow of conviction; it awakens the thunders of Mount Sinai; it gives more searching extent to the requirements of the law; it shews us its spiritual nature; it shews us the utter hopelessness that we shall ever be able fully to satisfy it. It tells us what the law demands, and the penalty that it inflicts. But it is not that we may be reduced to despair; it is not that we may put hope for ever away from us; but it is, that when we have been brought to see what God requires, and what man can render, we may be prepared for humble acceptance of mercy on his own prescribed terms: it is that when the

conscience has been awakened, and the torpid, dull, and lifeless heart has been awakened, that then the Gospel speaks to us in a seraphic voice of love—of tender, yearning, and saving love.

Now this is the message that God sends to us, which is to be borne ever more in mind. It is not enough that you come on the Sabbath days, and listen to the preacher's word; and attend during the short hour that we may speak to you; you must remember these things, otherwise I have preached, and you have heard, in vain. And we warn you of the counteracting influences which are ever at work in the chambers of the soul against the Gospel that we preach. We remind you that there are some hearers who do not understand; from whose hearts the Word is soon caught by the waiting enemy. We remind you, that the thorn and the brier are rising up to choke the seed: we remind you that the cares and the anxieties, and the absorbing and engrossing occupations of life, tend but too fatally to shut out the things of eternity, and to overbear the impressions that may have been temporarily made upon you. We would repeat again and again the word of exhortation; it is the minister's duty again and again to hold up the cross of Christ Jesus to his people; to deliver to them all which the Master hath given him in charge; to tell them of the Father's electing love, who chose unto himself a people from all eternity; and the grace of the Lord Jesus which caused him to suffer and to die for them; of the influence by which the barred and closed-up door of the understanding is to be opened, and by which, through the windows of the soul, enlightening influences are to be brought to the inner man. We must tell you of these things again and again; and O may we not tell them to you in vain!

We would speak to the *aged*, to the hoary-headed among you, to those whose days are numbered, and who are going down with a few more steps to the place appointed for all living. The messages of mercy which shall be borne to you will not be many; the opportunities of salvation may be very very few indeed. Perhaps when another Sabbath shall see the people of the Lord assemble in his house of prayer, one and another of you shall be away, and the place that knoweth you now shall know you no more for ever. We would press these things, then, on your acceptance.

To the *young* we would, in all earnestness and all affectionateness, offer our parting warning; and we would say, trust not in your youth and your strength. It may be that the eye is bright and beaming, that there is health in the cheek and vigour in the limb, and hope bounding in the heart; but in a little while there shall come the stillness of death; in a little while you must be laid in the coffin, and borne to the tomb; in a little while, even if life be lengthened out to four-score years, but it may be ere many more suns have set. We warn you; we are ambassadors for Christ; as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead be ye reconciled unto God.

But we cannot question—in truth it would be an unkindness as well as injustice, it would be an infraction of Christian charity, which “hopeth all things,” if we were not ready to admit that there are those among you who have known this salvation, who lay it up amongst their heart's dearest treasures, who feel that the wealth of this earth is poor in comparison. If it be so, if you have found Christ an all-sufficient Saviour; if you have borne to

him the burden of your weakness and your sin, and have found that he is able to relieve you, O then we say, for Jesus' sake, do what you may to make that salvation known to others. You cannot be misers of spiritual riches ; you cannot hoard them solitary and apart : there must be a companionship in these things ; and just in the proportion in which you apply the Gospel of Christ to your own soul, you will desire to make the tidings known to others ; you will be glad to engage in the missionary work ; you will rejoice to do any thing, even the smallest, to freight the ship that shall cross the blue waters, and bear the news of mercy to the heathen who are perishing without it.

But it is not to far-off enterprize that we will always invite you ; it is not always to missions to the heathen that we would urge you : we must take care that our charity, in its bound, does not leap over the objects that are at home. We must take care that those, our brothers and our sisters, living beneath the same skies, and tenanting homes close to your own, are not forgotten in our ministrations of mercy. And thus by an easy transition in the closing up of this matter, I would speak to you, and very earnestly speak to you, in behalf of an institution which I have undertaken to commend to your kindness and your patronage. It is one which at present is little known : it has existed but for a little while : it is only struggling into energy and operation : and probably much of the future success of this institution, in as far as it depends on the efforts of those who are engaged on its behalf, will be influenced by that which you shall do this day, by contributing to its means. The society for which I would plead is called "*The Society for the Relief of the Indigent Blind.*" It has existed now for twelve months. Its object is two-fold : to furnish readers who shall go to the homes of the poor blind, and read to them the pages of the Word of God, read to them portions of their Father's letter which they are unable to read for themselves ; and also to furnish conductors who shall lead them to places of worship, where they may hear concerning Christ and his salvation ; where they may hear concerning those things which it hath been our privilege to-day to speak upon—the Gospel. During the past year, that is to say, during the year of the existence of this society, sixty-nine blind persons have been placed on its books. There are at present fifty-eight blind persons who are under visitation ; thirty are provided with daily readers, eight with conductors to the places of public worship ; and to twenty-four families Bibles have been left. A portion of temporal relief has also been imparted to these suffering persons ; not, however, to a very large extent, and only as subsidiary to our higher and more important objects.

Now I cannot conceive of an institution which shall have more claims to the liberality and the ungrudging support of a Christian people. It hath nothing at all to do with party spirit ; it hath nothing at all to do with the tumultuousness of controversy. O I should be glad if it were proved to-day that a society for which we ask no partizanship should be a society which you liberally and willingly support. Glad, indeed, should I be if it were proved to the world that Christian persons do not need that angry feelings should be excited, and that there should be taken into alliance with their religious purposes something of earthly feeling ere they would open their purses, and pour forth their wealth to the service of the Lord. This society, growing ~~up~~ silently in the midst of our great town, ministers to the relief of those

who seem to have an especial claim on our commiseration. The blind! O, who cannot but pity them! For as often as we look on the face of dear friends and relatives—often as we look abroad upon the fair aspect of outlined nature—often as our eye is gladdened, and our heart is cheered by these things—we would remember that there are those cut off from these enjoyments, who never beheld the face of friend, or the fair face of nature; those who, being in deep poverty, are yet prevented from putting forth ordinary efforts for the obtaining of their own subsistence, becoming inevitably dependants upon charity, the cold and casual charity of the passer-by, or the legal and compulsory contribution from another fund. We would hardly expect, that being thus supported, they would have much opportunity of Christian instruction: if the legal support that is dealt out to them shall suffice, scantly indeed, for the body's wants, yet it hath done nothing for the soul; it hath made no provision for the Word of God; it hath afforded them no means to bring them unto the hearing of the Word: therefore this lack of service we would supply. And we ask you to contribute, O not sparingly, not as though we were asking you for aliens; but willingly, as a privilege, remembering, that what you do to these poor outcast ones you are doing unto Jesus. We do not ask for a questionable object; we do not ask you for a thing about which there may be a divided opinion; but we ask you to give to the blind and to the spiritually destitute, the things that make for their eternal peace.

Yet one more point I would urge upon you. When you look on a blind man, and see him separated from the view of all that is lovely and all that is engaging in outward nature; when you see that even when these things are spread before him, and he might be surrounded with all that can delight our eye, but to him it ministers no comfort; in that blind man you have the emblem of what each one of you by nature was; you have the emblem of what every human creature is in a state of nature; blind, deep, black darkness; darkness unbroken by a single ray of intervening light: and while the blindness stays, in vain are all the treasures of the Gospel opened to you; in vain is all the brightness of the things of Christ presented to you; you see them not; they are hidden; there is a film over your spiritual eyes. But when grace comes; when the Lord Jesus Christ hath poured into your souls the day-spring from on high; when you have been brought, like poor Bartimeus, to call unto Jesus and to ask that the Son of David would have mercy upon you, and would give you sight; and when the prayer hath been answered, and you can see all the bright things and the blessed which there are in his Gospel; O then when we say to you, there hath been laid on you a mighty obligation to look around you and to see whether beside your pathway there is not another and another like Bartimeus, forsaken and destitute, unfriended and uncared for, to whom you may minister. We cannot give him bodily sight: we cannot wield the power of omnipotence. The eyes may remain closed, and the temporal mercy be withheld; but we bless God that something we may do, and that that which is in the range of our power to accomplish is a far worthier thing; is of far deeper eternal importance than the merely giving sight to the unseeing eyeball. We may be helpers and fellow workers with God; and we may carry the tidings of salvation to the dark soul: and if we do so in simplicity and humility and faith, and prayer, God will give us his blessing.

It is a pleasant thought, that the time is quickly coming when all infirmities shall pass for ever away ; when the Lord's people, gathered alike from the lofty and the lowest—gathered in some of them from the beggar's hovel—from the uncared for and solitary homes of this great town, when we shall all be assembled in the kingdom of the Lamb, with no bodily infirmity, for the body will have been redeemed from the grave, and will be in all perfectness and completeness such as it was in its original constitution, and the spiritual enjoyment of the full light of the presence of Jesus. O may we meet there ! May those for whom we are pleading with you be there too ; not as now, to see through a glass darkly, but to see face to face ; not to know, as now, in part but to know even as also we are known.

## THE PRAYERS AND THE ALMS OF CORNELIUS.

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CAMDEN CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, JULY 5, 1835 \*.

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"And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God."—ACTS, x. 4.

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THESE words occur, as you are probably aware, in the history of the Centurion Cornelius, the first Gentile admitted into the Christian Church. We have on other occasions explained to you, that the power of the keys, with which St. Peter was entrusted, and on which the Papists lay such stress when contending for the supremacy of the Pope, appears to be nothing but the power of first opening the Church to the Gentiles. Hitherto there had been a wall of separation between Jews and Gentiles, the former belonging to the people of God, whilst the latter were strangers and foreigners. Hence the Church was a citadel, closed and barred against the great mass of the human population. But when Peter, instructed by the heavenly vision, admitted Cornelius and his friends into the Church, he did, as it were, apply the key to the massive gate, and throw open the citadel to those who had been hitherto excluded.

It is very observable, that the honour of thus opening the Church was carefully reserved for St. Peter, though Cornelius, as it would seem, might have been more readily instructed by others. We find it said of Philip the evangelist, after his interview with the Ethiopian eunuch, that "passing through he preached in all the cities till he came to Cesarea." Now it was at Cesarea that Cornelius abode, and you might have expected that Philip would have been employed in preaching to him the Gospel. Why is Peter to be brought from Joppa, a place at a considerable distance from Cesarea, unless it was because he was to be the commencement of the call of the Gentiles, and the honour of introducing this new dispensation having been promised to Peter, in reward of his memorable confession of Christ?

We would also remark, before entering more particularly on the history of Cornelius, that God put great honour on the appointed means of grace, by directing the Centurion to send for the Apostle. Why is not an angel instructed to preach the Gospel to Cornelius? An angel visited him, but only to inform him where instruction might be gained, and not himself to communicate that instruction. Certainly, as we conceive, the heavenly visitant might as well have preached the Gospel to Cornelius, as directed him to one of its ministers. But having appointed a ministry for the propagation of

\* On behalf of the Camden Chapel Schools.

Christianity, God would honour it by employing no other. An angel might guide to an apostle, but not discharge the office of an apostle.

Having premised these considerations on God's employing a man rather than an angel, and Peter in preference to any other preacher of the faith, (considerations which could not have been aptly introduced into the body of our discourse) we are prepared to examine the history of Cornelius, so far as that history has a bearing on the words of our text.

There are many important inquiries suggested by this history, on some of which it would be foreign to our purpose to enter; whilst others are almost forced upon us by the tenor of the narrative. It is evident that our text, containing, as it does, the words by which the angel first addressed Cornelius, represents prayer and alms-giving as acceptable to God, and as moving him to shew favour and grant blessings. The prayers and alms-giving of Cornelius were had in remembrance by God, and seemed to have prevailed on him to send the angelic messenger; and it well becomes us to examine into the reasons of the power and the prevalence thus ascribed to alms-giving; in order that we may estimate at their just value, duties to whose performance we are often admonished.

Thus the most observable thing in the history before us, on which we must, in the first place, enter, is, that the prayers and the alms were not those of a believer in Christ, but of a man who was still a Gentile, and uninstructed in the Gospel. It were not difficult to draw specious, though false, inferences from the fact, and to represent it as a proof that, provided there be high moral practice, it matters comparatively little what may be the man's creed. Such inferences have not unfrequently been drawn—with how little fairness we shall see in the sequel. But it is clear that the circumstances of Cornelius must be taken into the account in explaining our text; and it is quite necessary, therefore, that ere we explain that text more at length, we should survey the leading features of the history of the Centurion.

Now Cesarea, a large and magnificent city, greatly enlarged and beautified by Herod, was at that time the metropolis of Judea, Judea being in subjection to the Roman empire, and the Roman President holding his court at Cesarea. Hence there were many soldiers at Cesarea, divided into companies of one hundred each; each of these companies commanded by officers, who, from the number of their men were designated centurions. Cornelius, who may be judged from his name to have been of a noble Roman family, commanded one of these bands, distinguished as the Italian band; probably because composed for the most part of men from that country. We have no information from other sources with respect to Cornelius; we must therefore learn his character and condition exclusively from the Scriptures. Cornelius, it would appear, had been brought up a heathen; and had probably joined in all the idolatries of his countrymen: but he having been led, in the discharge of his military duties, to Judea, had enjoyed intercourse with the worshippers of the one true God, and was thereby instructed to renounce his superstition. We cannot pretend to determine what degree of acquaintance with the Jewish religion, with its prophecies, and sacrifices, and types, had been acquired by Cornelius: it is manifest, however, that he worshipped the one true God; and it is just as manifest that he had not been admitted within the pale of the Jewish Church. You will observe there were two sorts of proselytes among the Jews, namely,

the one the proselytes of the covenant, and the other the proselytes of the gate. The proselytes of the covenant were circumcised, and embraced the whole Mosaic dispensation, and enjoyed the same privileges as if they had been born Jews : the proselytes of the gate (and these were very numerous) were not circumcised, and not obliged to observe the ceremonial law ; they were only obliged to worship the true God, and observe certain moral precepts, which were said to have been delivered to Noah. In this condition they were admitted into the outer court of the temple ; while entrance into the other parts of the temple was confined to none but the circumcised. Now Cornelius was a proselyte of the gate, and not of the circumcision. We call him a proselyte of the gate, because he had evidently renounced idolatry, and was living by the guidance of God's moral law : but he was certainly not a proselyte of the covenant, for had he been circumcised, and thus grafted into the Jewish Church, he would not have been esteemed unclean by Peter, and there would have been no need of a vision to prepare the Apostle for his visit to Cornelius ; for you remember that St. Peter, being in a trance, saw a vessel descend from heaven, wherein were animals which the ceremonial law pronounced common or unclean. The Apostle is commanded to eat, but refuses on account of the ceremonial prohibition ; he is then told not to reckon as common what God had cleansed : and the purport of this vision, as we afterwards find, was to inform Peter that ceremonial distinctions were abolished, and that Gentiles, though uncircumcised, were qualified for admission into God's Church. So that it is clear that Cornelius was not circumcised, and that he had gone no further in the Jewish religion than becoming a proselyte of the gate. Residing amongst those who, whatever their sins, worshipped no God but the true, he had learned that God is, and is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. He had set himself, therefore, to the vigorous performance of such duties as natural religion, enlightened and corrected by some assistance from revelation, had taught him, as required from him as an accountable creature. He was earnest in prayer, for he knew himself dependant upon an invisible God : he was liberal in alms, for he was willing to shew, by his readiness in succouring the necessitous, his gratitude for mercies daily received. But we have no right to conclude that he went further than this. He may have read the Jewish Scriptures ; he may have been aware of the national expectation of the Redeemer ; but we have no information on these points ; we must not assume, therefore, that he was one who looked for the Messiah. He had indeed heard of Jesus Christ ; of the miracles which he wrought, and the death which he died. This is evident from what Peter said, when he reached Cesarea, and found Cornelius and his friends assembled to hear the message from God : " The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ : (he is Lord of all :) that word, I say ye know." Yet it was instruction with regard to Jesus Christ that Cornelius needed ; so that, though not unacquainted with his history, we cannot suppose him a believer in his doctrines : and all, therefore, that may be positively affirmed of Cornelius is, that having been brought to right views of the unity and spirituality of the Godhead, and his own business as a responsible being, he acted up to his measure of knowledge. So far as God had been pleased to reveal himself in his word, the Centurion took that revelation as his guide and his standard of duty ; and if he knew not much, at least he practised to the full what he knew.

And thus he gained the high character which is given him by the evangelist, "A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, who gave much alms to his people, and prayed to God always." Alas! ought not Christians to blush at this description of one who was yet only a Gentile? And must not most of us, notwithstanding the privileges we have enjoyed from our birth, shrink from comparison with this proselyte of the gate, and feel ourselves immeasurably his inferior in all that is characteristic of piety?

Acting, then, conscientiously up to the measure of his knowledge, and soliciting, it may be, greater light from above, Cornelius was favoured by God with a vision which directed him to send for Peter, that he might be instructed in the truths of the Gospel. The Centurion was distinguished by his prayers and his alms-giving, which had come up before God; so that the Apostle, when told of the circumstance, broke into the exclamation, "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him." Now here arise questions, which, if it be not easy to answer, it is not easy to overlook: Are, then, the duties of natural religion, if they be faithfully discharged, sufficient to recommend us to the favour of God? and may a virtuous Gentile, though ignorant of Christ the Redeemer, obtain final acceptance with his Creator? Is it true, that an acquaintance with the peculiar doctrines of Christ, so broadly insisted upon by the preachers of the Gospel, is, after all, of minor importance? If Cornelius stood so high in divine favour, merely through his performance of moral duties, are we to be told that salvation must depend as much on our creed as it does on our practice? It is thus the history of the devout Centurion may be perverted into an argument against the necessity of the Gospel; and the observation, that every one that worketh righteousness is accepted of God, be interpreted as proving that a man's faith is unimportant, if he do but form his life to the law which he professes. We observe at once in regard to these questions, that the case of Cornelius affords no information as to virtuous heathen, who act up to the light of nature and the religion of conscience, but then die without obtaining the assistance of revelation. We shall not enter on the case of such heathen; for there is nothing in the subject before us which requires us to travel into so wide and perplexing an inquiry. Cornelius was not wholly without the idea of revelation; and nothing, therefore, can be inferred from God's dealings with this Centurion, as to his final dealings with those who have never heard the Gospel. We deliver no opinion as to what those dealings will be; we only affirm that there is no groundwork for the opinion in the history of Cornelius. Had Cornelius died before visited by the angel, and had we been told that he was then removed into heaven, there would have been a great deal in the narrative from which to argue the possibility that the heathen may be saved. But as Cornelius did not die before instructed in the doctrines of the Gospel, it is evident we have only our own speculations to guide us as to his state had he gone hence in his ignorance; and it must at least be admitted, that our own speculations in regard to Cornelius have no right to pass as proofs in regard to God's dealings with the heathen.

Let it further be observed, that in place of proving the sufficiency of natural religion, the history of Cornelius proves rather exactly the reverse. Instead of shewing that a man's creed is unimportant provided there be righteousness

of practice, the argument, if any can be inferred from the narrative, is all the other way; evidencing that God requires in those whom he approves, that correctness of faith should be superadded to correctness of life. It is quite true that Cornelius, without the aid of the Gospel, had found favour in God's sight, such favour that an angel is sent to certify him as to the acceptance of his prayers and his alms. But what message is the angel commissioned to deliver? Does the heavenly visitant come charged with the announcement, that ignorance of Christianity was an unimportant thing when set against rectitude of conduct, and that the devout Centurion had no need for further illumination? On the contrary, the whole subject of the supernatural communication is the informing him how he may gain instruction in the truths of Christianity. So far from being told that his prayers and his alms rendered faith in the Redeemer unnecessary, he is only told, that his prayers and his alms are so remembered by God, that he had condescended to direct him to a teacher of that faith. The prayers and the alms are not commended as supplying the place of faith in Christ Jesus, but only as inclining God to furnish the Centurion with the materials of that faith: "Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God. And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter." So that, as we have before remarked, if any argument is to be derived from the narrative under review, it is an argument against, and not in favour of, the sufficiency of natural religion independent of revealed. If I appeal to the history of Cornelius at all in arguing the possible salvation of those to whom Christ has not been preached, it would be as opposing, and not corroborating the opinion. Cornelius had gone as far as man could go without the knowledge of Christ; and even Cornelius, it would seem, had gone no farther than to prove himself a fit object to be favoured with that knowledge: and though St. Peter declares, that "in every nation he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him," it is evident from the whole tenor of the narrative, that the Apostle means not that God confines his mercy to a particular nation, but that all, without respect of country, are capable of inheriting the promises of Christ; it does not mean that all who act faithfully up to the principles of natural religion find acceptance, as well as those who are acquainted with, and governed by, the principles of revealed: for this was certainly not the truth communicated to Peter by the vision that he saw: his reference, as instructed by that vision, must have been exclusively to the removal of all distinctions between Jew and Gentile: therefore the opinion which it gives possibly could only be regarded as declaring, that Christianity was to be henceforward the religion of the world, and not merely that of one of its provinces.

Now we have gone thus minutely into the case of Cornelius because aware how much it may be misrepresented. We cannot allow that his history can be appealed to, as affording proof of the sufficiency of natural religion. We know that Cornelius is often referred to as an instance of a man who without Christianity, did enough to secure the favour of God, and as therefore an evidence, that acquaintance with Christianity is not necessary to salvation. We say again we do not enter on so controverted a topic as that of the possible salvation of the heathen. We decline the question, simply because not fairly brought before us by the subject under review. Cornelius did not die a heathen —Cornelius did not enter heaven, through conforming himself to the principles

of natural religion ; and therefore nothing could be more unjust than founding an argument on the history of this Centurion, against the authority and importance of revealed religion. We will tell you all that can be gathered from the history—and the lesson is one that should be borne in mind : Cornelius had duly improved such means and assistances as God had been pleased to afford ; and therefore ampler means and fuller assistance were graciously communicated, according to the memorable declaration of our Saviour : “ Unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance : but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.”

We know of nothing of which it is more important that we be assured, and one which it is more necessary that we act out, than the principle that in the improvement of present advantage lies our attainment of others. God dispenses his favours with a due regard to the use made of them by his creatures. If we have acted faithfully up to one degree of knowledge, we have every warrant for expecting that a higher and a broader will be rapidly imparted : but if we live below our knowledge, and below our privileges, whatever that knowledge and those privileges be, there is no ground for the expectation, either in the nature of God or in the character of his dealings, that we shall be favoured with greater measures of his grace : the only way of obtaining more is by using diligently what we have. We are thoroughly persuaded, that God will be wanting to no man in any land, who, be his advantages and opportunities ever so scanty, avails himself with a vigorous care of all that is placed within his reach : and therefore we are sure that all will be judged at last, as beings who by the right use of the little might have made that little much. We know not whether the heathen, shut out from all the benefit of revelation, but who has obeyed strenuously the guidance of conscience, and practised its duties, can gain admission into the kingdom of Christ : we know not this, for the Bible is silent thereupon ; and the case of Cornelius is not, as we have shewn you, a case in point. This much can we be assured of from the history of the centurion, that if the heathen have done all that his circumstances allowed of his doing, God will not suffer him to perish for lack of knowledge. No man—we believe it as we believe that there is a God in the universe—no man on the broad surface of this creation shall be lost through deficiency of means of being saved. Whosoever he be, he must have been wanting to himself, he must have been deaf to the voice which summoned him to God, and angelic assistants who would have guided him to righteousness, if he sunk at last under the weight of divine condemnation. Had Cornelius not improved the means within his reach, Cornelius we have a right to think, would have been left in his ignorance of Christ. But he had improved those means ; therefore, rather than that he should remain without knowledge of the Saviour, an angel should descend to direct him to the obtaining of that knowledge. If there be men in the heathen world who have acted up to the suggestions of conscience, and to those notices of the invisible Creator which may be gathered without the aid of a written revelation, it shall not be, we are certain, through want of more knowledge, that these men fail of gaining admission into heaven. If more knowledge be all that is needed, more knowledge will be given ; and God will interpose, and either by sending a missionary to the land, or bringing them out from contact with idolatry, and drawing them into intercourse with more favoured servants, favour them with opportunities of learning the things which

belong to their peace. There is no greater truth that we think derivable from the history, than the truth that whosoever improves diligently the spiritual advantages which he has, shall be admitted into the possession of higher and better. It may be that God led Cornelius through successive states, and rewarded him under each: whilst in a distant land given up to superstition, conscience may have been the only preacher; but the sermons of this monitor were heard with reverence, and obeyed with diligence: and when the centurion had gone as far as conscience could lead him, and conformed himself to the prescriptions of natural religion, then may God have ordered it in his Providence, that public duty should summon him to the distant land where idolatry was unknown, and pure worship instituted. Here were new advantages within the grasp of Cornelius, and he displays the same vigour as before in their improvement. He possesses himself alike of that clearer knowledge of God, and the duties that spring from the relationship between the Creator and the creature, which God had furnished to the Jews among whom he dwelt. It was not the mere acquirement of information, it was the acquirement of education which he implicitly obeyed, and the motives by which he was uniformly actuated: so that he had exhausted, as it were, the communication which God had been pleased to make of himself; and now he stands on the boundary line of the means of grace, having diligently used whatever had been vouchsafed, and thus prepared himself for the opening of a yet wider field. And therefore did God interfere, and reward the improvement of the lesser advantages, by the bestowment of greater. The man who had acted up to the knowledge of conscience, is first favoured with an acquaintance with the knowledge of the law; and having acted up to the knowledge of the law is brought into the acquaintance with the knowledge of the Gospel. This was God's course of dealing with the Roman centurion, and we have no right to question that it is the course he pursues with all his accountable creatures. He imparts one degree of light, and knowledge, and grace, and assistance; but withholds every higher degree till full use has been made of the lower. He speaks to us at first in a whisper; but if we reverently hearken, there is a gradual deepening of the voice till it is as audible in the crowd as it is in the solitude, and we are continually visited with the messages of the Eternal One. His Spirit admonishes us at first to abandon this or that form of evil, and gives strength to the abandoning: and there is nothing necessary but that we obey the admonition, and employ our strength, and presently we shall find ourselves moved to a greater effort, and yielding to this new impulse, in consciousness that we possess a greater might. And thus whilst every thing is from above, our moral progress from the first outset in righteousness is dependent on no external help. Every man shall have his condemnation in his own keeping, and be just as answerable for the rate at which he advances, for delays and backslidings, as though it were his own strength in which he is to walk, and his own wisdom by which he is to be led. It is not more true that our sufficiency is of God, than that we have only ourselves to blame if sufficiency be wanting. It is as certain in that God proportions his gifts to the value we set on them, and the use we make of them, as that every good and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights. And so we enforce this truth, as shewing that the direct and sure method of increasing our spiritual advantages is to be diligent in their improvement, as perceiving that God will be wanting to

no man in assistance who is not wanting to himself in earnestness of endeavour.

The history of Cornelius is among the most important records in Scripture. We wish you all to refer to his history, that you may both learn your duty, and gather encouragement to its performance. There may be amongst you great diversity of circumstance; and one may have special privileges which far exceed those apportioned to another: but it is not the amount so much as the use made of privileges which is important to be calculated. We say to the man who may be disposed to complain that he has but few opportunities and few advantages relative to his spiritual condition, Compare yourself with Cornelius in Italy, or even with Cornelius in Cesarea. We will not admit that your moral circumstances can be more straitened than those of the Centurion; but your murmuring is evidence enough that they have not been duly improved, and the fact that your moral energies are not kept alive by exercise is evidence enough that they have not been duly improved: you have in your own hands the power of increasing them by their active use, not by repining at their scantiness. And we do entreat all classes amongst you, and especially those who are conscious they have made little progress in religion, but are disposed to throw the blame on circumstances not under their control, to examine whether they improve to the utmost the opportunities they have; and whether the want of ampler opportunities be not rather an excuse for their backwardness, than an explanation of its cause. Servants, for example, labour under great apparent disadvantages: perhaps if they live in an irreligious family they are seldom allowed to attend public worship. Men of business are often forced to give days and nights to the management of their commerce. Persons of commanding intellect or commanding station have a great deal to contend with, their temptations growing out of their advantages. But no person is so circumstanced that his piety is necessarily dwarfish. It is a libel on Providence to declare any one so placed and so conditioned by God, that he cannot rise to eminence in religion. The servant may fight his way with his means, and the man of business may fight his way with his means, and the man of talent, and the man of rank. It is within the reach of all; and the simple process, for all is, that they imitate Cornelius as he went on from stage to stage, improving the scanty means till they grew into the ampler, and then the ampler till they expanded into all the fulness of privilege. And if there be any matter of wonder, if not complaint, that more has not been done for him by God, that so little time is allowed him for the exercise of religion, and that his means of grace are so circumscribed, O we will take that man with us to the chamber of the Centurion, when it is suddenly entered by the magnificent and mysterious visitant; and we tell him that it was only by acting up to one measure after another of spiritual advantages that Cornelius at length obtained this glorious manifestation; and we conjure him that he act henceforward on the principle, that the one talent, if diligently traded with, and not hidden, shall ere long be doubled; and encourage him by shewing, that the Roman captain had an angel to visit him, and an apostle to instruct him, because while favoured with but few means of grace, his prayers and his alms had come up as a memorial before God.

Now we are thus brought to the second portion of our subject. We have gone sufficiently into the history of Cornelius to shew you the chief lessons which

it furnishes, and at the same time to expose the fallacy of certain inferences which men have attempted to draw from this narrative. It cannot be denied that Cornelius was as great a moralist as ever lived, and yet it would appear to have been necessary that acquaintance with Christ should be superadded to his extraordinary piety and devotion. But while the history thus demonstrates the insufficiency of good works in themselves, it as much demonstrates their acceptableness with God. The representation indeed is, that the prayers and the alms of Cornelius had been long ago noticed by God ; noticed with such approval, that they had obtained great reward. We have no right to say of these prayers and these alms, that of themselves they would have obtained heaven for Cornelius ; but we have a right to say that they obtained for him the being guided into heaven by faith ; and this is enough to prove them acceptable to God, and animate us alike to fervency in supplication, and to liberality in alms-giving. The only point, therefore, on which we need touch is the reason of that acceptableness which is thus proved to belong to prayers and alms. What was there in the prayers and the alms of Cornelius—what is there in the prayers and the alms of the most exemplary of the righteous, to incline God to shew favour, and to bestow blessings which he might have otherwise withheld ? This is a question which well deserves an answer. And we will therefore study briefly to shew you, in the first place, the reason why *prayers*, and in the second place, the reason why *alms-givings*, should have that prevalence with the Almighty, which the history of Cornelius proves they possess.

Now we need scarcely remind you, that we speak only of that prayer which is truly the out-going of the soul, and only of that alms-giving which can be traced to pure motives. There is a prayer, if prayer it can be called, in which the heart comes not up with the lip : and there are alms-givings to which no better motive can be given than natural sensibility, or the desire to please. It is not of such prayer and such alms-giving we speak : we know, that in place of being acceptable, they must be hateful in God's sight ; for it is the heart at which he looks, and it is the motive which with him gives worth to the action. But where prayer is the language of the soul, the expression of the desire entertained, and that desire such as is according to God's will, we can neither doubt nor wonder, that it has prevalence with the Almighty. There is indeed much that is extraordinary in the action of prayer ; and we must give it our strict attention if we would comprehend its bearing. When we kneel down, whether in the public assembly, or privately in the closet, it is not that we have wants to make known, as though the high and everlasting God were unacquainted with our necessities, and required to be informed : knowing far better than we can know what we really need, and what would be for our good ; prayer must be useless, yea, little more than mockery, if its presumed design be to tell him our wishes and our wants. We do not, then, pray in order to tell God any thing of which he would otherwise be ignorant : we pray only because the prescribed condition to our receiving is our asking, and because we know of no method by which we can as much shew our reverence to our Creator, and yield him as much honour. Prayer is an act of grateful obedience ; yea of an obedience which is more marked in proportion as we are impressed with the omnipotence of God. This characteristic of the divine nature seems opposed to prayer, as it seems to prove it unnecessary. But when I think upon God my mind is completely lost in the contemplation of a Being within the

compass of whose intelligence is gathered whatever has been, whatever is, and whatever is to come. I am certain, in regard to a Being whose observation nothing can escape, that he knows with a most thorough familiarity, the minutest circumstance in which I have an interest, and every emotion of my spirit, and every desire of my heart, and every necessity of my life. Then why pray to him? Why carry to him the tale of my requirements, as though we were of like feebleness with myself, and stood in need of being told in order to acquaintance with every want? Thus to all appearance, the omniscience of the Deity furnishes an argument against prayer. In confessing that nothing can be hidden from the Lord, I seem to pronounce it useless to address him with petitions: and therefore is there a great submissiveness in the act of prayer; so that this act is an act of obedience, and as such must be one which gains approval with God. We add to this, that the divine immutability, as well as omniscience, seems opposed to the usefulness of prayer. It may readily occur to me when I kneel down to offer supplication, that God's purposes are of that fixed and determinate character which forbids their being swayed by the importunity of my request. There is a confessed difficulty in understanding how the dealings of a Being, who by his very nature is unchangeable, can be at all contingent on the prayers of his creatures, so as to take a different shape according as these creatures are earnest or remiss in their approach to his mercy-seat. So far as prayer is commanded, the divine immutability is itself a reason for our expecting their success: yet as long as the command is kept out of sight, this immutability seems opposed to the possible sufficiency of our most fervent supplications. The more we conclude of prayer that it is obedience to the command, the more cause we give why it should be acceptable to God, seeing that "to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." But there is more in the act of prayer than obedience; more than the submission of the understanding to the revealed will of God. Prayer is a solemn acknowledgment of the Creator as the universal proprietor of all, and the plainest recognition of his most glorious attributes. The most high-wrought description of the everlasting God, yields immeasurably to that picture given of him by every one who offers prayer. Prayer confesses that "the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof;" for it addresses God as having every thing at his disposal; so that spiritual blessings and temporal must flow from his bounty. Thus the meanest of the children of men declares by the act of prayer his belief in the unlimited sovereignty of his Maker; and professing himself dependent upon God acknowledges him God, the spring of all good, the source of all life, the disposer of all events. And when an unknown individual who might strive in vain to gain admission to the noble and wealthy of his fellows, kneels down in thorough confidence that his voice will be heard by the Creator and Upholder of the earth, he bears a testimony to the greatness of God, which is not to be surpassed by any thing that issues from the loftiest writers of created intelligence. The poor man who addresses himself to his Maker, and pours out in his solitariness the desires of his spirit, declares by the act of prayer his unflinching persuasion, that though the Lord be high, yet he hath respect to the lowly; and we challenge earth, and sea, and air, and all its multiform tenantry, to furnish a finer attestation of the stupendousness of Deity, than that contained in the declaration, that nothing is too mean to be heard, for nothing is so insignificant as to be overlooked, by God.

There is to our mind something inexpressibly striking in the witness which *prayer* gives to the omnipresence of God. You ask me for the practical evidence of my consciousness that God is every where, that the great First Cause pervades all space, as well as inhabits all time. I may have declared this consciousness, and I may have heaped together all the epithets which language affords, in order to convey an idea so angust and overwhelming: but now you ask a simple demonstration of my belief; a practical demonstration that I know that God is always at my side; and I say, I give you this: we may be on the mountain when you make the demand; we may be in the crowded street, in the retired desert, or on the waters of the great deep; but wheresoever we are, or whatsoever the surrounding scene, if I do but breathe out the words, "God be merciful to me a sinner," I have given you the most emphatical demonstration that you need. Yes, that I can pray with the firm persuasion that my prayer will be heard in any place or at any moment—there is my testimony to the omnipresence of Deity. It is not when you have left your imagination to travel throughout boundless space, and have caused line upon line and system upon system to pass before it, and have declared to you, that each speck in this immensity is equally the habitation of our Maker, it is not then that I set before you, most fervently and most touchingly, my conviction, that that God is every where; it is rather when I prostrate myself before God, in full assurance that he sees me, and address myself to God, in full assurance that he hears me. And if it be indeed true that prayer is what we have described, an act of singular obedience, an act of homage, a testimony to those incomunicable properties which belong to the divine nature, who shall marvel at its prevalence with God? The prayer of Elijah shut and opened heaven; the prayer of Joshua caused the sun and moon to stand still: and we wonder not at these stupendous effects. Prayer fulfils the end of our creation; which is, that we might commune with God, and yield him the glory due unto his name. Prayer is the acknowledgment and adoration of those perfections in which God himself takes infinite delight. Prayer is the clearest recognition of the divine sovereignty, and our holding every thing at the will and the pleasure of our Maker. And therefore might it be expected that *prayer* would be acceptable to God; and therefore may we quite understand why, when Cornelius had been fervent and unwearied in supplication, and an angel was at length sent charged with the gracious communication that the petitions of the Centurion were referred to as the procuring cause of the celestial visitation, so that the first words of the messenger were, "Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God."

But the *alms* are joined with the prayers of Cornelius, and we have, therefore, in the last place, to inquire, why alms-giving should be acceptable to God. There is an equal danger of zeal in shunning one extreme leading us into the opposite: and in no respect is this danger greater than in regard to good works. In our eagerness to disclaim the possibility of our works being meritorious, we may easily assume a lofty and over-bold tone, until we may convey the impression, that our works cannot gain acceptance with God. Now this is altogether an erroneous impression, not warranted by the statements of Scripture: indeed these statements must produce just the opposite impression; for the Bible abounds with declarations which prove that God observes and will reward our liberality to the suffering: "He that hath pity to the poor

lendeth to the Lord, and that which he hath given shall be paid him again.' " Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness." But when Christ declares, that our visiting the sick, clothing the naked, and feeding the hungry, shall be reckoned and recompensed at the judgment, as though done to himself, he undoubtedly attaches a worth to works of benevolence, and asserts that they find favour in God's sight. We are sure, indeed, that with alms, as with prayers, there can be nothing in the work itself to deserve at God's hand: but of his mere mercy God may be, and is pleased to accept our alms and oblations when given from love to himself; and thus it becomes our inducement, by making it our interest, to be ready to give and glad to distribute.

We are sure, then, from the testimony of Scripture, that alms-giving as well as prayer has prevalence with the Almighty to the procurement of blessings. And why should this be so? What is the reason which gives our alms their acceptableness with God? Why, we reply, that alms are our tribute of acknowledgment that we are only God's tenants, holding as his stewards whatsoever we possess; they may be said to be the rents which we pay him for our estates, and by which we own that our estates are his property, and as acknowledging and confessing that all things come from him; that the silver and the gold are his; so that however he may be pleased to entrust his gifts with others, he still remains the Sovereign Proprietor.

We affirm, moreover, of alms-giving, that it is the best and truest thanks giving. Grateful for the mercies bestowed upon ourselves, we shall be eager to evince such gratitude by endeavours to impart it to those around. It is not possible we should view God's goodness in the blessings we enjoy, and be conscious of no emotion of love towards the Giver: neither is it possible that we should feel love towards God, and not towards man; for "he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" So that where there is a thankful heart, there will necessarily be a desire to lighten the distresses, and increase the happiness of our fellow-men, formed like ourselves in the image of God, and redeemed like ourselves by the blood of the Mediator; and to such desire, alms-giving will be the visible expression. And if it be true, according to the declaration of the Psalmist, that "whoso offereth God praise, glorifieth him," then must it be true, that by the bestowment of alms we do God honour. Where then is the cause of surprise, that alms should find acceptance, and go up, as in the case of Cornelius, as a memorial before God?

Besides, if we could not exaggerate the power of prayer, we may appeal to all we have advanced in regard to that power, and adduce it as demonstrative of the power of alms. I give money in furtherance of the favourite objects of benevolence; but that money may come up before God in the petitions of those whom I have been instrumental in relieving, and who may be supplicating blessings on their benefactor. I contribute towards the support of an hospital; and then I lose sight of the donation, and know not the precise good which it helps to accomplish: but there is an emaciated thing in one of the wards of that hospital, of whom I know nothing and care nothing, but whose admission, it may be, can be traced to my bounty, and who, during the languishment of sickness, is praying God to bless those who provided the asylum: and thus have alms procured supplication in my behalf, and supplication has wonderful

prevalence with the Almighty. I give what I can spare to the cause of missions, and the great work of distributing the Bible : my money is deposited in the plate at the church door, or paid to the collector, and I have no power of tracing its exact course, as operating in the evangelization of the world : but in a while that money, of which I have lost sight, re-appears on some far-off shore, in the shape of a copy of God's Word, or in the self-denying teacher, and it thus becomes effectual to the conversion of unbelievers ; and thus there may be worshippers of Christ within the foreign shore, whose names never reached me, but who, in their morning and evening devotion, besiege the mercy-seat with petitions, that the richest gifts may descend on those who have sent them the blessed light of the Gospel, and thus our alms-giving is going up as a memorial before God, rising in the form of the intercession of those whom he loves.

The case is just the same in regard to schools for the education of the poor. You are asked for your money, and you give your money, and you have a present reward in the well-founded persuasion, that you have contributed to the most powerful of all methods for promoting the moral culture of a neighbourhood. You know nothing of the child who is to receive education through your liberality, and you have no means of ascertaining the precise instance in which your bounty is effective of permanent good. But it is quite possible there may be one poor child who must have been excluded from the school, had you refused your contribution : and this child grows up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord : so that your alms, of which you lost sight so soon as they were paid over to the managers of the institution, have produced a virtuous and God-fearing character ; and though you may never know the individual thus benefited, and that individual may never know you as his benefactor, yet will there be through a long life, the sound of entreaty on behalf of the generous one, who provided that infancy and childhood should be plied with the lessons of the Bible. And thus is your money appearing in the form of invocation of blessing ; it prevails with God, because coined, as it were, into that effectual fervent prayer of the righteous man that availeth much.

O, there is something very beautiful in the thought, that we may be thus making friends of the mammon of unrighteousness ; and that much of our domestic peace, and much of our consolation in seasons of trouble, and much of growth in grace, and much of our meetness for the kingdom of heaven, may be given in answer to the petition which is going up in our behalf, from parties to whom we have been unconsciously useful ; and that our alms, like those of Cornelius, may so be had in remembrance with God, as to move him to the continually sending us fresh tokens of his favour.

We have no space to enlarge further ; though it was in regard particularly to this last portion of our subject, we have passed hastily over much that deserves a closer examination. We have spoken of alms-giving, when the education of the poor is the object that solicits support ; and we have now to ask your annual contribution towards the maintenance of the schools connected with this chapel. These schools, I can assure you, are as deserving as ever they were of being liberally upheld by all who feel it their duty to give sound and scriptural instruction to the children of the poor. For our own part, we strengthen daily in the persuasion, that in the diffusion of the fear of God lies our whole security against the worst ills which can overtake a nation. The

politician and the philosopher may have their several specifics, but the Christian knows but of one remedy with which to counteract the disorders of the state ; and he is a traitor to his principles, if he substitute any thing for the Gospel of Christ, and if he labour not to disseminate that Gospel among the ignorant. We ask, then, your support to schools whose great object it is to educate the children of your poor neighbours in the principles of the Bible. I make it a rule, in this case, simply to ask you, not to press you, for your contribution. If I have preached to you faithfully and profitably, I shall find the evidence in your answer to these annual appeals. If the evidence be denied me, it is myself rather than you I would blame. I would receive the message as an intimation to which I am bound to attend. We simply ask you for your alms, that the work may continue : we ask for your prayers, that the work may be successful. You should pray that God would bless the institution to whose maintenance you contribute. We have abundant reason for believing, that these joined prayers and alms go up as a memorial before him, and procure, if not the visit of an angel, yet the gift of his Holy Spirit, who can alone open the young heart, and make instruction efficacious.

## THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD.

“ **I**f a man be a statesman, and the arrangement of a vast empire be delivered into his hand, we can scarcely expect that, amidst the multiplied and mighty affairs that solicit his attention, he should find time for the more ordinary duties of life. We feel that, engrossed with occupations of overwhelming importance, it is hardly possible that he should be assiduous in the instruction of his children, or the inspection of his servants, or the visiting and relieving his distressed fellow-men. But we never feel that his greatness would be diminished if he were so assiduous: we are ready to admit, that we should give him, in a higher degree than ever, our respect and admiration, if we knew, that while he had an eye on every wheel of the machinery of government, and his comprehensive mind included all that had a bearing on the well-being of the empire, he discharged with exemplary fidelity every relative duty, and attended with as much assiduousness to all that concerned his own immediate dependants and neighbours, as though he had not to extend his carefulness over the thousand departments of a complicated government. We should like to know what would be thought of that man’s estimate of greatness, who should reckon it derogatory to the statesman, that he thus combined attention to the inconsiderable with attention to the vast, and who should consider it compatible with the loftiness of his station that, amid duties as arduous as they were faithfully discharged, he had nevertheless an ear for the prattle of childhood, an eye for the interests of the friendless, and a heart for the suffering and the destitute. We put it to yourselves to decide, whether there would not be a feeling amounting almost to veneration, towards that man who should prove himself equal to the superintendence and guidance of every concern of the empire, and yet who could give a consideration and personal attention to the wants of the poorest of its families; and who, while gathering within the compass of a mighty intelligence every combination of foreign and home policy, protecting the commerce, and maintaining the honour, and fostering the institutions of society, should yet minister tenderly at the bed-side of sickness, hearken patiently to the tale of affliction, and be as active to the widow and the orphan, as though his whole business were to lighten the pressure of domestic calamity.

“ We are not, then, afraid to apply to you our notions of true greatness, for a refutation of the common argument against the providence of God. We know not why that should be derogatory to the majesty of the Ruler of the Universe, which, by the general confession, would add immeasurably to one of earth’s potentates. But if we should rise in our admiration and applause of the statesman or sovereign, in proportion as he shewed himself capable of attending to things comparatively insignificant and petty, without neglecting the grand and momentous, certainly we are bound to apply the same principle to our Maker, who, whilst he marshals the stars, and orders the motions of all worlds throughout the theatre of immensity, yet feedeth the young ravens, heareth the cries of the creatures that call upon him, and numbereth the very hairs of our heads. It is a fine position we are able to take, that of its being indispensable to the greatness of the Creator, that he should be acquainted with, and give heed to, the every concern of the meanest of his creatures, and

that it would be to bring him down to the level of the finite, to suppose any thing too minute for his notice, or any thing too trifling for his carefulness. We have shewn you that an earthly ruler would be more dignified, and draw more of the reverence of his subjects, in proportion as he could command attention to the great with attention to the small: and does it not, then, follow, that we only ascribe to our Maker what he must necessarily possess, when we declare it impossible that he should be unobservant of the most inconsiderable insect, or overpowered by the magnitude of the sovereignty of the universe? And we would add to this, that all objections to the doctrine of God's providence are virtually objections against the great truths of the creation. Am I to be told that this or that ephemeral thing, the tiny tenant of a leaf or a bubble, is too insignificant to be observed by God; and that it is absurd to suppose, that the every animated point which contains existence should be found engaging a portion of this inspection, which has to spread itself over the revolution of planets or the career of angels? Then I would fain be informed to what authorship I am to refer this ephemeral thing? Whom am I to pronounce its creator? I subject it to the magnifying powers of the microscope, and I am amazed at observing with what skill it has been fashioned; how it has been clothed with the vermillion and feathered with the gold: but you interrupt me by telling me that it is dishonouring to God to suppose him careful or observant of this insect: and then my difficulty is, Who was it created this insect? If it be dishonouring to God that he should give any *attention* to so insignificant a thing, must it not be dishonouring to God that he *created* such a thing? I know not what there can be too inconsiderable for the providence, if it hath not been too inconsiderable for the creation of God. We know not any thing so mean and so worthless that it must be overlooked by Deity, unless it be first proved to be too mean and too worthless to be made by Deity. What it was not unworthy God to make, it cannot be unworthy God to preserve. Why declare any thing excluded from his watchfulness, which could not be produced but by his power? Thus the universal providence of God is little more than an inference from his being the universal Creator. You may speak of this or that creature, and ask us in a tone of triumph, how we can believe that that which we call the animalculæ, which is scarcely perceptible, is observed, and watched over, and cared for, by that Being, inaccessible in his sublimity, who sitteth on the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers before him: but we require you in reply to tell us, whether it was made by God, and unless you can point to another Creator, we must hold that it must be every way worthy God, yea, every way required by his nature, that he should turn all the watchfulness of the Guardian on the work of his own hands: and, in place of agreeing with you, that the Almighty must be too exalted to give any of his observation to this inanimate particle, we must conclude that it must be as necessarily an object of that observation, as though it were a planet, with the myriads of a teeming population: for it cannot be more true that, as universal Creator, God made the heavens and the earth and all that therein is, than that as universal Upholder of whatsoever he hath formed, "the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth."—*From a Sermon recently delivered by the Rev. H. MELVILL, A.M.*

## THE ACCEPTED TIME.

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REV. G. SPRING, D.D.

STEPNEY CHAPEL, MAY 24, 1835.

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**"Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."**—**2 Cor vi. 2.**

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EVERY man of intelligence must deplore the abounding of immorality around him. Whence is it that all the maxims of common prudence, and indeed all the acknowledged principles of honourable character, are so easily dispensed with in matters of religion? The Word of God rebukes this spirit of indecision and sluggishness. It would often startle men from their intellectual and moral apathy, by assuring them that there is a period beyond which forbearing mercy will not be extended, and that the destinies of an unchanging eternity may be suspended on the passing hour.

The declaration which immediately precedes the text is a quotation from the prophet Isaiah, in which Jehovah is represented assuring the Messiah that he had heard him in his intercession for the Gentile world, and that his reign should be one of abundant spiritual blessings; furnishing the strongest encouragement to men to seek his mercy. This was the privilege which the Apostle was desirous the Corinthians should not receive in vain, but accept and improve it with all promptness; because, says he, "I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

And may not this affecting exhortation, beloved hearers, be addressed this morning with strong propriety to us? Is there with God an accepted time? Is there with him a day of salvation? And who will venture to extend the limits of this hopeful period beyond the present hour? True it is that the past may have been more rich in encouragement and in promise than the present. The past is gone; the present is the favourable moment: and the most favourable is now passing by; the hours of this holy Sabbath, the fleeting season which so soon shall be gone, in which I have the opportunity of addressing you—this, through all remaining time, is the fittest and most auspicious for becoming reconciled to God, and securing the salvation of the soul. No time must be lost in this infinitely momentous concern. It is not too soon to repent and believe the Gospel to-day.

These are the general thoughts which I desire to illustrate and present to your grave consideration, especially those of you who are still strangers to God, beloved hearers, in the following discourse.

Nothing is more obvious, in the first place, than that *if it is the duty of men*

**EVER** to accept the Gospel, it is their duty now. None will contend that they ought never to become reconciled to God. If it is our duty ever to love that which is lovely and amiable, to hate that which is hateful and odious, to submit to that which is wise and good, to confide in that which is trustworthy—in a word, to cease to do evil, and learn to do well, then must we confess that it is our duty at the present time. Besides, the Gospel is a revelation from God, and contains nothing which can be innocently rejected: it is worthy of all acceptance; it has paramount claims, and the obligation to accept it is the most weighty obligation that can be addressed to the minds of men. Whatever else they neglect or defer, they may not for another hour turn a deaf ear to the voice of God, speaking in the Gospel of his Son. Whatever may be their character and circumstance, whatever apology or excuse they may offer, whatever temptation may allure them to disobedience; no condition, no excuse, no obstacle, can destroy or relax this solemn obligation. There is no conceivable circumstance in their existence, save the actual loss of intellectual capacity, that can relax this obligation for a moment. All the reasons by which a man endeavours to persuade himself that it is not his duty to accept the Gospel *now*, goes to prove that it is not his duty to accept it *at all*; and the native tendency of all such reasoning is to sunder the bonds of moral obligation, and liberate men from the judgment of the Most High. If it is not their duty to become the disciples of Jesus Christ *to-day*, then it *never* will be, and never *can* be. If the obligation can be relaxed or suspended *now*, then may it be relaxed and suspended *for ever*. But if the duty of being a child of God is an unchanging duty, if no man ever ought to have been His enemy, and if it is the most ungrateful, undutiful, and unreasonable thing in the world to remain the enemy of God, then no more can you call in question the propriety of becoming Christians *at all*. Can you call in question the propriety and duty of becoming so *at once*? God, who made you, dear hearers, has a right to expect this, and if you refuse this, will charge you with the refusal. The Son who bled and died for you has a right to expect it, and if you still reject him, will upbraid you for your unbelief. Angels have a right to expect it of you: they wait *to-day* to bear the glad intelligence of your reconciliation to the celestial courts. Men have a right to expect it of one another; and reason as they will, resolve as they will, oppose as they will, postpone as they will, their own consciences have a right to expect it, and for every moment's delay must that oppress and condemn them.

Again: *the commands and invitations of the Bible have all a present force and obligation.* There is no requisition in the Scriptures to which the God of heaven attaches so much importance, which he urges with so much urgency, strength, and tenderness, and to which he has appended such tremendous sanctions, as the one referred to in our text. No where does he require men, and invite men to return to him at any future period, remote or present: such a requisition would be a reproach to his government. He says, “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.” But we refuse, perhaps, and imagine he does not require it *now*: he “commands *all* men *everywhere* to repent.” But though this is commanded, it does not require the *present* duty: he says to the sinner, “Repent and be converted”—“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at

hand"—“Repent and believe the Gospel”—“Be ye reconciled to God.” His commands are plain and positive; they are absolute; they are universal in their extent, and contain not the slightest allusion to a day of future obedience. Christ invites lost sinners to “come to him,” to “look to him,” to “take his yoke upon them,” to “take up his cross and follow him,” and to “come and take the waters of life freely.” And nowhere does he invite them to do this *to-morrow*, or give the least intimation of a day when his invitations shall be of more propriety than they are *now*: on the other hand, the whole scope of his instructions is the other way. On one occasion, you will recollect, as he was passing through the villages of Judea, he bade a certain individual “Follow me.” The man hasted to excuse himself: “Lord,” said he, “suffer me first to go and bury my father.” Jesus saith to him, “Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.” Not long after this another said, “Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell which are at my father’s house. Jesus saith unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.” No absorption in secular occupations, no domestic endearments, no pressure of outward calamity, may supersede this first, this paramount command, “Follow me.” The language of the Bible is, “Come, for all things are *now* ready:” “*To-day*, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts:” “Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God:” “Seek the Lord *while he may be found*; call ye upon him *while he is near*:” “Acquaint thyself *now* with him, and be at peace:” “Behold, *now* is the accepted time; behold, *now* is the day of salvation.” Here is no licence for delay; all the force of the divine authority is thrown on such command. Can the call be resisted without bold and reckless impiety?

This leads me to observe again, *the work of salvation is in every view a great work*. To the real Christian, patient labour, patient watching, continued self-denial and prayer, are necessary to ensure progress and perseverance in the divine life. A state of unviolated quiet and security cannot with safety be indulged a moment. It is only by present and unremitting diligence that he can hope to contend successfully against an alluring world, a treacherous heart, and a still powerful enemy, and finally to rejoice in deliverance and triumph. The anxious sinner has a still greater and more momentous work than this: he is under the entire dominion of a depraved mind, and must be quickened from his death in sin. Notwithstanding all his anxiety he is still the enemy of Jesus Christ, and has yet to give him the first and highest place in his affections. He has to break off his transgression by righteousness, and his iniquity by turning to God. He is still a rebel against the Most High, and has yet to give him his throne, and take his proper place at his footstool. He has still an unhumbled and self-righteous heart, and must throw himself exclusively on the Son of God for redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace. And certainly the thoughtless and unconcerned sinner has a great work to do. Entirely under the dominion of a blinded understanding, a perverted conscience, and a depraved will; he is yet to be instructed in the knowledge of God, to be roused from his moral lethargy to feel the burden of his iniquity, to be awakened, converted, and sanctified by the influence of the Spirit of God, and more than ever to enter into life: and be it arduous or easy, it is a work which must be done.

Eternity, with all its joy and glory on the one hand, and all its shame and sorrow on the other, is suspended on this mighty work, while in effecting it the sinner is met at the very threshold with a reluctant and opposing heart, a heart fully set in him to do evil, a heart deceitful above all things and desperately wicked ; a heart in which there dwelleth no good thing.

And it is in view of such an object thus magnified, that he solicits indulgence and delay ! Infatuated man ! Because his native inclinations must be subjected, will he give them time to gather increased strength ? because his conscience must be roused from her torpor, shall he still cry, "A little more sleep, and a little more slumber, and a little more folding of the hands to sleep ?" Will it be easier to repent of his sins, and forsake them, after he has persevered in them a little longer ? If it be a secular enterprise on which your heart is set, and which you say must be accomplished, how unhappy are you until it is done ! how eagerly you prosecute it ! You lose no time, you suffer no solicitation to interfere till it is finished. And will you regard the great concerns of eternity with so little interest as to defer them to some future and distant period ? Will you thus neglect the most momentous matters that come within the compass of human thought ? Will you exhaust all the exciting energies of your mind in the pursuit of vanities that cannot profit, and put off with an easy indifference, and defer to an indefinite time, the amazing interests of your future and eternal destiny ? Who can measure the importance of securing the salvation of the soul ? "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul ? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul ?" O can this admit of delay ? Is it not a concern that interests him now to flee to the stronghold ? Are you sure, dear hearers, that another time will do as well to flee from the wrath to come, and to lay hold on eternal life ?

Another consideration on which I would urge your present attention to this subject, is founded *on the shortness and uncertainty of human life*. There is not an individual who hears me, that can flatter himself, even with the faintest hope, that he shall not, in a few years, at most, descend into the tomb. Our days are passing away like a tale that is told : they are swifter than a weaver's shuttle ; they are even as a vapour that appeareth for a little while and then vanisheth away. It is the uniform experience of men, that their years appear shorter and shorter as the number of them increases. Let any reflecting man look back on the portion of time that is past, and he will be satisfied that human life with him cannot be continued to any great extent. It is but a few fleeting years, and this whole congregation, in one commingled multitude, will lie beneath the clods of the valley : and what is still more important, not only is death not far distant from any one of us, but it may be at the door. It is not the old alone who die, but the young ; it is not the diseased alone, but the healthful and the vigorous ; it is not alone the afflicted, and deformed, and depressed, but the happy, and beautiful, and the gay : they descend indiscriminately to the dust, and the worm covers them. Your superiors, your inferiors, your parents, and your children, where are they ? How many of them have finished their course, and become the inhabitants of the eternal world ! Your equals in age, your companions in the pleasure and business of this world, your rivals in fame, where are they ? It is but yesterday, and they entered upon the theatre of human life with you ; now look back, look around you, and you see the place which knew them, knows them no more. Death has pursued them, and they

have sunk to the grave. While safe in their own view, and in the view of all around them, they trod on the brink of the dark and narrow house ; eternity has opened its mansions for their reception, and they are gone to give up their final account.

Are *you* more safe than they ? Behold their end, and learn your own. Death was near to them while apparently distant ; it is near also to you. Human life depends entirely and absolutely upon the sovereign will of God ; and he has given you no security for one future moment. The purposes he designs to accomplish by all our earthly existence, are often accomplished unexpectedly to us ; and then the frail tabernacle falls suddenly, and as in a moment the destroyer accomplishes his work, the beating heart is still, and the soul takes its flight to eternity, and there is no opportunity for repentance then. The character and condition remain unaltered : he that is holy shall be holy still, and he that is filthy shall be filthy still. When once the master of the house is risen up and shut to the door, they shall call from without in vain. No tidings of mercy shall break the silence of the grave ; no offers of pardon are reported to the congregation of the dead. Is it not, then, emphatically true, that the present is the accepted time ? To-morrow is an uncreated day, and to thousands will never arrive. What multitudes, think you, are now in eternity, who lost their souls by depending on to-morrow !

I have seen men die who thus delayed their preparation for eternity ; nor can these lessons of gloom and horror be easily erased from my memory. What if the most thoughtless sinner in this assembly were told by a voice from heaven to-day that he could not live an hour ! Imagine him to wake up, as it were, at once to the full sense of this dreadful reality ! How would he look ? What would he say ? I seem to hear him exclaim, " Must I, then, go into eternity in an hour ? God knows that I have made no preparation for this event. I knew that impenitent men were sometimes cut off suddenly ; but it never entered my mind that I was to be one of their number. And now what shall I do ? Death will not wait ; the work must be done ; the whole business of an immortal being in this short life is crowded into one brief hour. That is an hour of mental agony and distraction : O what shall I do ? " Ah, dear hearers ! to stand halting between two opinions is to stand on the confines of perdition. Come away from the brink of that angry precipice. Death is near : a moment more, and you may be groping your way to the dark valley ; another slip, and you may be on the boundless ocean. I warn you to go no further in searching for the convenient time to prepare for death.

Permit me, then, to remark again, *Consider how late a period of human life it is with you, even now.* With some it is apparently the dawn of their being, with others it is the noon-day, and with others it is the evening. But even with the young and with the middle aged, who can tell but the greatest part of human life is fled ? and to those who are descending into the evening of time how certain is it that the last rays of life are just departing. Of what a large majority of this audience may it be affirmed, that by far the greatest portion of their earthly existence is measured out, and not a moment of it can be recalled. Diligence cannot restore it ; prayers, tears, and sacrifices cannot restore it is passed away for ever : it is as completely beyond your power as the years beyond the flood. And how much of it has been wasted away—of that precious time, of those golden days, of those blood-bought hours of mercy, given you

that you might escape from hell and fly to heaven, how much has been mis-spent and wasted already! Ask the best, the holiest, the wisest: they will tell you of their unavailing regrets and mourning over lost and mis-spent time. And you, who have never as yet made your peace with God, and who persist in your hostility against him—where is the moment of your life that has not been, in God's account, occupied in sin? Melancholy reflection to an ingenuous mind! to have done nothing all your lives but sin against God! How many entire years of sabbaths have you disregarded! What solemn and tender expositations, what a weight of truth, what a multitude of sermons have you listened to with an unbelieving, impenitent mind! Against how many personal remonstrances and admonitions have you steeled your hearts! How have you neglected the Bible, and misimproved the opportunities of prayer! How often have you come away from the house of mourning unmoved! How often have you stood by the bed-side of death, and turned away uninstructed and obdurate! How often have you been led to the side of the grave, and there deposited a loved friend, and returned to your labours just as forgetful of God and eternity! What evil examples have you set! In what heedless and unhallowed courses of conduct have you engaged! And how much have you done, and left undone, to encourage your fellow-men in their impenitence! How many souls might you have snatched from death, and what a multitude of sins might you have covered, had you long ago become a Christian! How might you have comforted the desponding, refreshed the languishing, chased away sloth, enkindled the ardour of the soldiers of the cross, and given firmness, fortitude, and perseverance, to their good fight of faith! How often might you have strengthened the weak, recovered the wanderer, and brought back to their first love those who have gone after vanity! How many glorious triumphs might you have gained over the powers of darkness, and over the men and things of the world, over the corruptions of your own heart, had you really enlisted under the banner of the Captain of your salvation! How much might you have learned of the value of the Christian inheritance, and what anticipations of the glorious reward that awaits you beyond the grave, if you had been one of the early disciples of the divine Redeemer! And now, after so long time, will you still harden your hearts to the deceitfulness of sin? Will you occupy the few remaining hours allotted to your repentance in rejecting the grace of the Lord Jesus, and by your own voluntary unbelief, exclude yourselves from his kingdom? Or will you wake from your lethargy to flee to the Saviour? Will you haste to relieve the anxieties of a burdened conscience, by casting yourselves at once upon his sovereign and almighty grace? Will you resolve, "God helping me, I will no longer live in this ungrateful neglect of Christ and of heaven: the time past shall suffice. If there is mercy for such a sinner I will seek it now?"

I remark again, *Consider what you are doing, and how you are treating God, by deferring this great work.* For a moment allow me, with the utmost plainness, to draw your thoughts to this single consideration. After so long a time of disobedience, this sacred place and hour finds your mind impenitent, still in a state of rebellion against your rightful sovereign; your affections are still set on things on the earth; your mind is occupied and filled with idle things: you disregard and despise the divine goodness and forbearance; and you are still going astray, just as you have done ever since you were born. For a series

of years have you been sinning against the most convincing light, and imperative obligations : you have known your duty, and have not done it. The still small voice of conscience, which has ever continued in tenderness, has been patiently expostulating with you, and you have resisted its expostulations. The blessed Jesus who left the Father's bosom from love to our creature race, for many a year has been inviting you, and entreating you, to come to him that you might have life, and you have to the present hour uniformly and obstinately refused to come. And now, to add to all this, when in his adorable name, and in his authority, and in his stead, we come and beseech you to become reconciled to God, you reply, you are not ready, you want more time, you must defer the work a little longer. Be astonished, O heaven, at this ; and, thou earth, be horribly afraid. You are not ready to forsake your wickedness now ! You plead for further opportunity to rebel against the Infinite, and to trample on all that is good, and pure, and kind, and gracious ! You would still abuse his mercy, despise his judgments, and crucify his Son afresh ! You ask for time still to resist his Spirit, to counteract all the means he is using to awaken and save you ! Yes, in this house of prayer where your offended God is on his throne of mercy, and where the blood of sprinkling speaketh better things than the blood of Abel, and where the adorable Comforter is whispering to your agitated conscience, and would plant all his promises beneath your wounded and aching head—the only requital you make for this long-suffering tenderest mercy, is the cool disposition and purpose to press on a little longer in the road to death and hell.

Dear hearers, I have no pleasure in uttering such language as this before you, God knows : but to me it seems (I know it seems otherwise to you) that such delay is a deliberate insult to the Most High. It allows no apology, no extenuation ; it is rebellion with a high hand and a desperate heart. It is but a secret wish to sin yet more and more, to add iniquity to iniquity yet more and more ; while with melancholy haste you are treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of an injured, abused, and insulted God. It would seem that every claim of the Father's mercy to dwell with you really must be extinguished. It would seem that the blessed Saviour should never find a welcome in your bosom. It would seem that henceforth that unfeeling and guilty heart should contain no room, no retired chamber, for the Holy Ghost to occupy. And how long think you the abused, insulted God will bear with a creature that thus treats him ? He does not need you, dear hearers. Sinner you are but a poor worm : “ Behold, even to the moon, and it shineth not ; yea, the stars are not pure in his sight. How much less man, that is a worm ? and the son of man which is a worm ? ” The sun would rise and set, and the moon would walk on in her brightness, and the streams would flow, should you no longer be numbered with men, and lie slumbering in your graves. The seasons would return, the rains would descend, the church would be extended, the Spirit would be poured out from on high, not one of the purposes of the divine mercy would fail in the accomplishment, should you in a very short period sink to perdition. God has the right, and he has the power, to cut you off in the midst of your wickedness. And believe me he cannot bear with you always. It is of his mercy that you are not even now consumed. It is a miracle of mercy that you are out of hell : and it is by no means impossible that his patience towards some of you is just exhausted.

You need not be at all surprised, dear hearers, if the time is near at hand when you drop into eternity. You might, indeed, from a thousand considerations, well expect it; from day to day, from hour to hour, and from moment to moment. God cannot much longer forbear: and O dreadful hour, when God draws near, and sets your crimes before your eyes! Dreadful hour! Prepare I say, to meet him. "He that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be cut off, and that without remedy."

Allow me to remark, once more, *longer delay on your part may provoke God to suffer you to go on in sin.* It is true that his patience may not yet be exhausted; he may not immediately withdraw his supporting hand: but if you provoke his patience he may do worse than this; he may prolong the existence of present good as a curse to yourselves. He may abandon you to your own heart's iniquity, and give you up to your own content; he may never reclaim you, but give you over to the hardening influences of an abused gospel, and make it a savour of death unto death; he may withdraw from you his Holy Spirit, and commission the great adversary to take you captive at his will: and then how unspeakably gloomy all your subsequent history; how deep the shadows then that will fall on your grave; what blackness of darkness will extend itself over the regions of your eternity! O the gloom and solitude, the fear and trembling, the anguish and indignation, the wrath, and shame, and despair, which will come on the men thus abandoned of God!

But if God abandon you to this judicial blindness, this will be but a portion of your cup, dear hearers. If he thus abandon you, just as certain as you have a being will you be lost. Some of you do not appreciate this thought. Could we draw aside the veil, and know that any of you were thus abandoned of God, so far as it regards your eternal well-being, it were just as though you were lost already. So far as it respects yourself, you might as well be dead and damned this holy Sabbath, as thus suffered to go on in incorrigible iniquity. Ah, dear hearers, if you were justly sensible of the plague of your heart, you would tremble at the prospect of such calamity. God has said, "My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh." By and bye you may seek and strive in vain, because his blessed Spirit has forsaken you. You may as yet be made to feel that "it is not of him that willetteth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." The anger of God may yet turn a deaf ear to all your prayers and cries, and shut you out of his kingdom; and when some dense cloud of impenetrable insensibility shall envelope, and He who hath mercy on whom he will shall harden your heart, and steel you over with remediless impenitence, you will know what it is to be abandoned of God. Abandoned of God! O what a doom is this! Abandoned to fill up the measure of your iniquities! I pity such a man; from my soul do I pity such a man: he has survived the moment when his conscience was tender, without finding an interest in the blood of the cross. He looks back on the scenes when his bosom trembled, and he was almost persuaded to be a Christian. He remembers the hours of enjoyment, and he feels he has outlived them all. Now he feels the withering curse of spiritual abandonment.

What shall I say? Dear hearers, the man who is now resolving to become thoughtful, and prayerful, and penitent, at some future season, when that season arrives will find that thoughtfulness, and prayer, and repentance come not at his bidding: that convenient season with very many will nev-

arrive: no, never. Before it comes you will be thoughtless and gay; you will be as much absorbed in the affairs of earth as ever; you will be as much disposed to flatter yourselves with the expectation of a more convenient season still; or you will have been called to your last hour, and have sunk into irrecoverable woe.

I have thus endeavoured, with as much simplicity as I may, to make it appear that the present hour is the best and safest, and, in every view, the fittest season to accept the Gospel of the Son of God, and escape the wrath to come. Permit me to request you to review the considerations that have been offered, and if they are not possessed of intrinsic weight and force, let them fall to the ground; but if it is right in itself that you accept the Gospel now—if God himself invites and requires it of you—if the work is too great and momentous to be deferred another hour—if human life is short and uncertain, and never can be recalled—if by any further delay you provoke the God of heaven, and treat him with marked contempt—and if by neglecting this present call you expose yourself to be finally abandoned of God, and to the everlasting sorrow that will come upon all his incorrigible enemies—then well assured am I that it is with no feeling of extravagance, no undue and unreasonable pressure of obligation with which we say, “Behold, *now* is the accepted time; behold, *now* is the day of salvation.”

Now tell me what is your purpose in relation to this solemn question? I address you who have no hope in this mercy of God through Jesus Christ. What is your purpose in relation to this solemn question? Will you become reconciled to God to-day? Will you repent every one of you now, that you may receive forgiveness of sins, and the promise of eternal life? The kingdom of God, dear hearers, draweth nigh unto you. The time will come when you will feel condemned and without excuse for not having accepted the great salvation to-day; nay, for not having accepted it long and long ago. O it is the rage and infatuation, the clouds and tempests, the filth and pollution of this world, the poison of sin, that makes men so regardless of their souls.

Do I hear any of you say, “The work is difficult; it is not to be done in a moment?” I have not denied that the work is difficult; and those, certainly, have very little acquaintance with their own hearts who affirm that it is not so. What makes it difficult? Is it for any other reason than that they have no heart to it? And will God make any allowance for this? Ought you to make any? Ought not the next emotion of your souls to be, the exercise of a right heart and a right spirit, dear hearers? But where did you learn that this work is not to be done in a moment? The thief on the cross repented in a moment: the three thousand on the day of Pentecost repented in a moment: and so does every man who does it at all, repent and believe the Gospel in a moment. Conversion is not a progressive work: the change of character is as sudden as it is great. There is no intermediate space of time between the last moment when the man rejects the Gospel, and the first moment when he accepts the Gospel. How long, think you, does it take a man to repent of his sins, or to love God, or to believe in the Saviour, when he begins?

Do you say that of yourselves, without the aid of the Holy Spirit, you are unable to become Christians? I know it: no creature is able to do any thing of himself independent of God. But can you not do it in the strength of your

dependence, and more easily now than ever? Are you sure of this, that the blessed Comforter is not now moving upon your minds, and that if you gratefully fall in with his influences, you will not find that his strength is made perfect in your weakness? O it is your absolute dependence on almighty grace that is all your hope. Desperate indeed would be your condition if you were thrown on your own resources. "Let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me; and he shall make peace with me." It is but to feel that you have perfect weakness, and yet have Omnipotence to lean upon, and the work is done. Will you demur if you have such sufficiency and such resources? will you hesitate? O what sorrows will come upon you, if you continue to defer this great salvation! What! sinners of Britain defer the great salvation? Favoured with such an unbroken series of Sabbaths, and faithful representations of the Word of God, will *you* hesitate? What an hour will that be to some of you, dear hearers, when with your voice convulsed in the agonies of death, you call to mind that the harvest is past, and the summer is ended, and you are not saved! Others there have been (you have seen them—we have all seen them)—others there have been who postponed the work just as you are doing now—postponed the work till to-morrow; but they delayed too long; they delayed to their everlasting ruin. Thousands upon thousands now beyond the reach of hope, were once sinning just as some of you now are; were once in the house of God halting between two opinions, as you are now halting; were once resolving to seek pardon, as you are now resolving; but they vacillated a moment too long, and sunk into the lake of fire. O that I could persuade you to decide to-day! By the freeness of the divine mercy, ineffable mercy, by the tenderness of Jesus' love, by the grace that rolls from his cross, by the freeness of his great salvation, be persuaded now to betake yourselves to this fountain of living waters.

Do you say, "Not now; I cannot make up my mind so suddenly as to-day." Well, be it so: take the responsibility yourself; let it be so. Shall it be to-morrow? "Why no; I cannot pledge myself," I hear you say. "To-morrow! it is too soon." Well, shall it be the next Lord's day? I hear you reply, "I scarcely hope to become a Christian even in so short a period as that." Well, brethren, make an end of this business: in the presence of God, and under your own fearful responsibility, fix your own time. Shall it be before the close of another year? "Ah," I seem to hear you reply, "I may not live another year: and then where shall I be? O that I could become a Christian now; it seems to me the time has come." Well, come to Jesus *now*: the time has come. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come, and he that heareth says, Come." "Behold, *now* is the accepted time; behold, *now* is the day of salvation."

## THE VALLEY OF VISION.

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REV. H. BLUNT, A.M.

TRINITY CHURCH, SLOANE STREET, WHITSUNDAY, 1835.

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" Thus saith the Lord God; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live."—EZEKIEL, xxxvii. 9.

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HAVING frequently, upon this holy day, endeavoured to set before you the Scriptural proofs and testimonies of the great and important doctrine brought before us by our church, I shall to-day content myself with one of the many collateral and incidental corroborations of this high truth scattered through the word of Revelation.

The incident from which the text is taken, occurred in the prophet Ezekiel, during the time of the Babylonish captivity, when the Jews, carried away as prisoners from their native land, were, as a nation, politically degraded, and were lying hopeless and lifeless, for the loss of their kingdom. Hear the remarkable account, as given by the prophet himself, in this chapter: "The hand of the Lord was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones, and caused me to pass by them round about; and, behold, there were very many in the open valley, and, lo, they were very dry." We learn from the eleventh verse of the chapter, that these bones represented the whole house of Israel, who in their despondency were exclaiming, "Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost." And the vision was vouchsafed for their great encouragement, that they might know that there was mercy and deliverance in store for them; and that they should yet, once more, again rise from their present state of political thraldom, and take their stand among the nations of the world: while, in all probability, there was, as regards the people of Israel, a still further scope contemplated by the vision; and this was, the period of the spiritual regeneration of the conversion of the whole house of Israel, in days which are still future, and which shall assuredly arrive, when all Israel shall be brought to the knowledge of our God, and of his Christ.

In this view, and confining ourselves to the literal interpretation of the vision, it is a very striking and instructive one. But our intention is, while proceeding with the incident before us, to leave its primary intention, thus briefly touched upon, to your own consideration, and to dwell upon those points of peculiar spiritual interest, which renders it so proper to the service of this day.

Proceeding, then, with the vision, we read, "And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord God, thou knowest.

Again he said unto me, Prophesy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord." Behold, then, in the vision before us, first, a most affecting picture of the state of all men by nature ; and next, a most remarkably accurate and instructive representation of the usual method which the Almighty takes for the deliverance of his people out of this state of spiritual bondage and spiritual death, into the glorious liberty wherewith Christ makes his people free.

First, can there be a more scriptural representation of the state of the natural man, than these "dry bones of the valley?" Is not the whole world thus full? Are not all as hopeless and lifeless with regard to spiritual things by nature? And are not the efforts of natural men to awaken and enliven them, just as preposterous as they would have been to re-animate the dry bones in the prophet's vision? Surely if the general description in the Word of God be true, no one can doubt this. While, therefore, the man of the world looks with complacency and delight on every large assembly of his fellow-men, although congregated for the most unprofitable of purposes, the Christian cannot behold it without fear and anxiety: it is to him what the valley of dry bones was to the prophet. And mingled with his other fears comes the apprehension lest this be indeed the field of death, which obliges him, when looking on such a scene, often to ask himself, "Can these dry bones live?" Is there any man who can so influence these persons, who appear now to live only to the follies and sins of the world, and appear dead to the best interests of their soul, dead to eternity, as to call them forth from this state of spiritual apathy and slumber and fill them with spiritual life, making them the humble, lowly, unworldly, self-denying followers of the Lord Jesus Christ?

Most remarkable is the answer which the vision supplies us. In the face of all difficulty—nay, and what must have appeared to the prophet an absolute impossibility, a positive absurdity, had he permitted himself to reason upon the subject—he is enjoined by God to begin at once, and to preach to these dry bones. "O ye dry bones," he is commanded to say, "hear the word of the Lord." What a hopeless task! How well might Ezekiel have objected and expostulated, and inquired, "Of what avail to call upon these poor, insensible relics of mortality as if they were possessed of life and of reason? The grave cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee." Such would have been the wisdom of the world: but the prophet's wisdom was of a different order; it was the wisdom of a child of God; and that wisdom is in every case the same—to hear and to obey; for he immediately adds, "So I prophesied as I was commanded."

This also is the obvious duty of the minister of God. If he were to judge for himself he would be often hopeless of success, when he considers what is oftentimes the state of his audience while he preaches (as he often must) the great and glorious truths of the everlasting Gospel to a people lying in darkness and the shadow of death. But so far is he from feeling this, that although no human being can think more lightly than he of the power and efficacy of his own endeavours, he entertains the fullest confidence of success as regards every soul to which he is in mercy sent. He acts upon an express command to go and prophesy to the dry bones; to preach the Gospel to every creature peaceful or hostile, or deaf, or dead.

He knows, further, that the revealed Word has declared, "It pleases God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe :" and accordingly he goes down in faith into the valley of dry bones, and carries with him the word of life—that word of which the unchangeable Jehovah has declared, "It shall not return unto me void, but shall accomplish the purpose whereto I sent it." And thus armed with the *word* and with the *promise*, he cares not how dead or how dry be the bones ; but he takes his stand, and, in the language of the Prophet, "prophesies as he is commanded ;" comforting and encouraging himself with this single declaration of his God—"Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."

Now let us again turn to the vision, and mark the first faint appearance of the prophet's success among his extraordinary audience. He thus continues : "As I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone." When the prophet commenced, all throughout that desolate valley wore the appearance and the stillness of death ; there was neither voice nor motion. Strong in faith he persevered : and as he preached the bones began to move. There was first the rustling upon the ground that marked that the bones were in motion ; and then the rattling that would be occasioned whilst each bone was once more attaching itself to its kindred bone, and building up the restored and perfect skeleton.

Hear how the spiritual effects keep pace with the natural. We observe in it the first symptoms usually visible when the Gospel is preached to them that are dead. It does not long sound over the valley of desolation without some adequate effect : for never is the word of life sent except where the Lord has a people to call, and to awaken, and to convert, and to edify. There is soon seen a shaking among the dry bones. Some are observed to tremble beneath the power of the Gospel, and to cry out with the jailer, "What shall I do to be saved ?" Others are at least temporarily aroused and excited, their prejudices shaken, and their slumbers interrupted. There is a moving to and fro : a new subject of conversation has been introduced. So that even in those instances (alas ! there are many such) when the effect extends no further, this at least is done—the silence of death is broken, the perfect insensibility to the sound of the Gospel is at an end ; and though it be but a melancholy thought if it extends no further, than to increase their condemnation, and to be a savour of death unto death, still at least the dry bones are moved, and in many cases a skeleton army is summoned forth.

More however than this (thanks be to God) is usually effected, and more than this was effected by the prophet, for he thus continues : "And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above." Here the transformation was complete ; the whole man was reconstructed ; bones, and sinews, and flesh, and skin, were perfect. But still there was something wanting ; for the prophet affectingly adds, "but there was no breath in them." Here, then, let us observe, the next step in the spiritual application of the vision. The faithful preaching of the Word of God at the command of God will often not only cause a shaking among the dry bones, but further their assuming the appearance of life and health to which we are endeavouring to call them. We continually witness this—the Word of Truth has such an effect, that, even when we are not brought to spiritual life, we assume all the outward forms of godliness, attend upon every ordinance

which a true Christian can attend upon, adopt his habits, swell the ranks of God's professing people, and to the eye of man are not only almost, but altogether Christians. The sinews and the flesh have come up upon the dry bones, and given all the appearance of vitality. What, then, do they want? What are they destitute of? Alas! we are compelled to exclaim with the prophet, respecting all these, "There is no breath in them."

This must have been a point most trying to the prophet's faith in the vision before us. He had called together these slumbering relics, and at his bidding the semblance of life had been restored to them: but now, as David says, he was "at his wits' end." It was no more he continued to prophesy; all he was permitted to do had been done. The form of men had been restored to those that lay motionless and helpless, an exceeding great army, but only to curse the valley with a more melancholy picture of mortality than that from which he had just restored them.

While the prophet was waiting for fresh direction, and feels his utter inability to proceed, the Word of the Lord came again unto him: "Then said he unto me, Prophesy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army." You will observe a striking peculiarity in this passage, namely, that the prophet is no longer directed to prophesy, or speak to the bodies, as in the former part of the vision, but to "the winds," or "breath" (the word is the same in the original), which should once more reanimate them. In the spiritual intention of the vision how plain a direction have we here for the ministers of the Gospel. It is not enough that we urge upon you duties, and precepts, and doctrines, and promises, and calls to repentance, and invitations to spiritual life; there is yet another, and an equally important duty for every minister to perform, who desires to see the fulfilment of his Lord's most gracious declaration—"The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live." This most essential duty is, to prophesy, or to speak unto the spirit; to pray fervently, faithfully, and constantly, that the Third Person in the ever-blessed Trinity may breathe upon these slain, that they may possess something more than the mere semblance of life, and, in the language used by the Almighty himself in the interpretation of the vision in the fourteenth verse, that he may "put his Spirit within them that they may live." It was when this was done, and not before, when the breathing Spirit had breathed upon the slain, that the prophet pronounced that "they lived, and stood upon their feet."

So it is, brethren, with ourselves. You may do much too in outward appearance, have all the semblance, and all the propriety, and all the beauty of spiritual life. The bones may all unite together; the external covering may be most carefully adjusted over them: if the breath be absent all is vain: you do not live; nay, even worse than that, for it may only tend to mock and to delude both us and you with the appearance of life where life is not. Most true and most important is that declaration of our God, that "if we have not the Spirit of Christ we are none of his." It is just in proportion as we are guided, and directed, and strengthened, and sanctified by the Spirit of God, that we are now among the number of his true and acknowledged people, and

that we shall be hereafter placed in those eternal mansions which the Lord Jesus Christ has purchased for us, but for which we must be individually prepared and qualified by the Spirit of our God.

Let me, then, call upon you, earnestly and solemnly, as you would not deceive yourselves, and as you cannot deceive God, to consider whether this great vital truth of our religion has at all the same place in your minds which it possesses in the revealed Word, or in the services of our church. I will confine myself, as our time is short, to the latter. Look only at the prominence of this great doctrine of the absolute necessity of the Spirit of God for every degree of spiritual life, as manifest in the service of your own church. Observe only how you yourselves have recognized it since you entered this church to-day. At the very opening of this service we besought God to "grant us his Holy Spirit, that those things might please him which we do at this present, and that the rest of our lives hereafter may be pure and holy, so that at the last we may come to his eternal joy; through Jesus Christ our Lord." Here in a single sentence the Spirit of God is recognized, prayed for, acknowledged as the only person through whom our present service can be made pleasing to God, or our future lives holy, or our meetness for eternal joy possible. You then next solemnly besought the Lord to "make clean your hearts within you," and to "take not his Holy Spirit from you." You have then thus invoked the same Spirit in one of the most comprehensive prayers that mortal ever penned, in the beautiful litany of our church: "O God the Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners." And you have afterwards, in the same prayer, besought God to "endue you with the grace of his Holy Spirit, to amend your lives according to his most holy word." While in addition to these (and many more might be adduced) you have, in the collect for the day, expressly asked God to "grant you by the same Spirit, to give you a right judgment in all things;" most clearly, therefore, inferring, that not only in the first awakening of spiritual life, and not only after you have received this divine gift, and have been, like the prophet's army, restored to animation, and set up upon their feet, you still require, day by day, and hour by hour, the abiding influences of that divine Spirit, to "give you a right judgment in all things."

Your necessity, then, is, even according to your own confession, just as real, just as uniform, as was that of the restored army of the prophet. At any part of their renewed existence, had their breath been again recalled, every individual would have dropped motionless and lifeless, on the spot on which he stood. At any period, yes, at the latest and most advanced of our spiritual life, let but God withdraw his breath, and recall his Spirit, and the life of faith is gone, the Christian is no more. The very act of withdrawing his Spirit would bring with it instant spiritual death: for the believer only lives, even at his best estate, moment by moment upon the strength of the Redeemer, with whom he is in blessed union, and has imparted to him as he needeth, by the Spirit of the Lord Jesus. If, brethren, you are convinced of these truths, (and who that knows the Word of God will deny them?) then all we ask, and all we urge upon you is, to pray for the Spirit, to live in the Spirit, to walk in the Spirit: and what will be the consequence? Let the apostle answer: "This I say, walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh;" "He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the

Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting :" for "to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace."

Mark, then, the effects, not only in the language of the Apostle, but in the language and in the meaning of common sense. Is it not, in other words this, To live as the world lives—its pleasures your pleasures, its follies your follies, its sins your sins—is full and sufficient proof that you are not partakers of the Spirit of God. O brethren, be assured that all religion which falls short of the possession of this blessed Spirit is, as we have seen, without life ; it has every thing pertaining to life, except the power of breathing.

What can such a religion profit you ? It is as the sinews and flesh of outward form, but nothing more. There can be no life in you ; it cannot impart to you the blessed relationship which every Christian bears to his heavenly Father ; and for this simple reason, that the Word of God declares that it is only by the Spirit of adoption that we can be taught to cry " Abba, Father." *We* cannot enable you to draw near to God in prayer, for the same Word declares, that we can only " have access by one Spirit to the Father." *We* cannot make you holy, for the same Word assures us, we are " sanctified by the Spirit of our God." *We* cannot lead you to hope that you are the subjects of God's sovereign love, for the same Word says expressly, he hath only " chosen us through sanctification of the Spirit." *We* cannot give you any ground of hope, that you have the abiding blessing of our God ; for the same Word declares, that we can only " know that he abideth in us by the Spirit that he hath given us." Lastly, *we* can never prepare you for his eternal kingdom ; for the same Word asserts, that " except a man be born of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven."

Cease, then, we urge you, and affectionately entreat you, from a religion made up of flesh and sinews, forms and ordinances ; and be satisfied with nothing short of that powerful indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the breath of spiritual life, never denied to those who seek it, which renews the heart, sanctifies the life, regulates the affections, detaches us from the world, and renders us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

## THE CHRISTIAN CONFLICT.

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REV. T. DUNN,

MARSH CHAPEL, STRATFORD, JULY 8, 1835.

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"He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death."—REVELATIONS, ii. 11.

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IT is an obvious truth that all temporal blessings emanate from Divine goodness ; man cannot command or purchase them, nor does he deserve them. Yet this admitted truism would not detract from the guilt of that individual who chose to resign himself to indolence and indifference, or render it unjust that he should suffer for yielding to such conduct. Your daily bread is the gift of heaven's munificence ; yet, "If a man will not work, neither should he eat," is the just decree both of reason and revelation. It is in God that we live, move, and have our being. Still would you not strongly censure every man that failed to use the appointed means for the preservation of his existence ; and would you not denounce him guilty of suicide, who should abstain from food, air, and exercise ? The husbandman would never realize the harvest, but for the dew and the rain which descends, and the sun which shines at God's command : this does not, however, release him from the obligation of ploughing, sowing, and preparing, in every possible way, for the desired event.

Such is the connexion between the bestowments of infinite mercy, and the duty of man, in reference to things temporal : and the connexion is as close and perpetual in reference to spiritual gifts. Of *these* the ever blessed God is the sole and sovereign dispenser ; yet, you are taught, that their communication is to be preceded by earnest and continued entreaty on your part : "Thus saith the Lord, I will yet further be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them." Under the economy of grace, the command and promise is, "Ask and ye shall receive ; seek, and ye shall find : for every one that asketh, receiveth ; and he that seeketh, findeth :" while the destruction of the impenitent spirit, that refuses to rise and act upon the invitation of the God of love, will be as inevitable as it will be just. "Because I called, and ye refused ; I have stretched out my hand and no man regarded ; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof ; I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh ; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind ; when distress, and anguish cometh upon you." It is evidently, then, imperative on all to whom the Gospel is proclaimed to seek "the pearl of great price," and having received it, to retain it with the utmost tenacity, to guard it with the most sedulous care, that its brightness may never be effaced, its value always appreciated. "As ye have received Christ Jesus, the Lord, so walk ye in him, rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught ; abounding therein with thanksgiving ;" is but one of many injunctions of a similar

character. So that while redemption from the curse is according to the riches of God's grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved, a knowledge of an interest in that redemption, joy in God, the hope, the prospect, the earnest of heaven, will usually be in proportion to the devotedness in the service of God, and adherence to his commands that may be evinced. If you would enter the gates of paradise, expect not to be carried to the skies as a dead body is carried to the grave, on other men's shoulders ; you must task your powers to the uttermost, ever striving to enter in, until seated before the throne, you join the everlasting song, saying, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and glory, and blessing."

The text is formed on this principle, you are not instructed to attempt some great thing, as if it were possible for you, unaided by the might of the Omnipotent, to attain eternal bliss, the object of the inspired writer is to inflame you with a holy ambition to conquer, in the best of causes. You are here viewed as a soldier of the cross, while one of the most sublime and momentous considerations that can be conceived, is urged why you should be vigilant and unceasing in your efforts to obtain the crown. "He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death." That you may overcome, and thus be exempt from the bitter pains of eternal death, allow me to remind you, first, of the opponents you need to have subdued ; secondly, of the means for their subjugation ; and thirdly, of the felicity consequent upon their overthrow.

**THE ENEMIES YOU REQUIRE TO HAVE SUPPRESSED.** Their name is Legion, for they are many : yet their aim is one—it is to possess the citadel of the heart, to dethrone its rightful sovereign, to enthroné an usurper and traitor in his stead. This contest is not of modern origin: it began in the garden of Eden, has been carried on ever since, and is now raging as fiercely as ever in all the inhabited parts of the earth: the foul spirit of darkness, with his thousand emissaries, is arrayed against the soul that would live answerable to its high destiny, that would rise to the adoration and love of its glorious Creator. It is essential then that you survey your opponents, that you mark their operations, while you abhor and aim to intercept their designs. The most formidable foe that presents himself is Satan, the powerful, the malicious being that destroyed man in a state of innocence, the destructive spirit that compassed the first murder, the accursed fiend that has originated all the moral evil whereby the world has been deformed ; and myriads of immortal spirits bereft of eternal happiness, have fallen into the caverns of endless despair. This subtle opponent struggles for the throne of the heart by introducing within it, enmity against God, disaffection to his authority, distrust of his providence, aversion to his service, hatred to his people. He darkens the understanding, hardens the heart, stifles the cry of the sinner for mercy and salvation, labours assiduously and unceasingly to hurl the human race into the vortex of destruction. He tempts one to lie, another to steal, a third to blaspheme : a portion of our species he fills with pride and arrogance; another section he torments with envy and every hateful feeling. Into the minds of a different section he infuses doubts of the Being of a God, or the authority of Revelation. There are some whom the insidious foe plunges into the depths of sensuality ; others have suggested to them the fallacious idea that they are sure of immortal joys, because in some respects better than thousands around them; while not a few

of the sons of men are driven by this hellish adversary to the verge of despair by being instructed either that God is too great and too holy to notice them with approbation, or that they are far too vile and depraved to receive the blessings of eternity. Youthful inquirers after salvation are especial objects of Satanic hate: he whispers in the ear of such, that they are born into the world to enjoy it; to their imagination he pourtrays the riches, honours, and pleasures of this world; to them he suggests that death is far distant, that the future will supply abundant opportunities for attention to the soul and eternity; or he hardens their spirits to all entreaty, and all remonstrance, that eventually they may care for none of the things that relate to their everlasting happiness; or the crafty fiend strives for the mastery by lulling them asleep in the lap of forgetfulness, and arms of indifference, ever soothing them with the idea, that if they are not so perfect as might be desired, the mercy of God will overlook, or forgive any deficiency that may be discerned. Thus is the foe ever active with young converts to divert them from all proper thoughts of God and themselves. Hence we occasionally perceive such persons spending their time and energies in matters of doubtful disputation, and conforming to the world, when they should be growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

But not only youthful inquirers, professors of religion in general are constantly assailed by the prince of darkness: he seeks to delude and destroy by tempting them to cast off the fear of God; to restrain prayer, to neglect the means of grace, to come down from their watch-tower. He tells them, that if they are to be saved, nothing can prevent it; that God does not see sin in his people; that he only sees his people in Christ, the Beloved, in whom they are accepted; and that, therefore, he does not with disapprobation notice, and will not punish, the transgressions of his chosen. Consequently the father of lies goes on to suggest that all anxiety and circumspection is superfluous, and only the mark of a weak faith, or he works upon their fears, suggesting that their afflictions are an evidence of God's displeasure—that heaven is too high and holy for them—that they were never truly converted, that their pretensions to piety are a mere delusion and dream; that they have not persevered as they ought, and that their many misgivings and anxieties are only the prelude to their eternal overthrow. Thus from the pinnacle of presumption does the foe aim to precipitate the saints of the Most High to the gulf of despair: or if these courses do not succeed, the plan of attack is changed; the adversary and the accuser covers the servants of the living God with the mantle of sloth; in which condition the duties of the closet are neglected, the works of piety abandoned, and the cross, which the command of a risen Saviour required to be taken up, is shunned. The foe of God and man produces this languid Laodicean state, by tempting them to cavil at and criticise the dispensers of God's truth in a censorious spirit, or by inducing them to occupy their leisure time in vain conversation, or in perusing light and frivolous publications, until the holy and elevating influence of the Gospel is scarcely imbibed by them at all.

While, therefore, men of every age, rank, and clime, individually and collectively are assaulted by the cruel deceiver and his emissaries, those portions of the human family who evince any anxiety to gain the heights of the new Jerusalem, are peculiarly assailed by the powers of darkness.

I have thus referred you to some of the wiles of your chief adversary: to enumerate them all is impossible, for

"The serpent takes a thousand forms  
To cheat your souls to death."

he catereth about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. Though he has destroyed millions, his thirst for blood is still insatiate. He knows full well how to time his attacks, at what particular inlet to the soul to plant his artillery, and the peculiar dart that will reach the temper, the habits, the constitution of each individual. Hence the proud, the passionate, the depraved, the timid, and the melancholy, are easily approached through the medium of some common failing, or constitutional infirmity. And as to the time of commencing the assault on the spirits of men, the same wily course is adopted. As a cunning adversary considers when the troops are fatigued, scattered, asleep, or apparently incapable of vigorous effort, so the devil assaulted our divine Redeemer when alone, after fasting forty days, and just before his crucifixion. As the pirate and the robber pass by and spare the empty vessels and the poor, but watch for those that return laden with treasure, so this malignant opponent resisted Joshua at a throne of grace ; sifted Peter as he descended from the mount ; and sent his messenger to buffet Paul when he had been caught up to the third heavens. Whether, therefore, you regard the craft of the foe, or his deadly hate, or his past success, or your own weakness, the contemplation is sufficient to awaken holy fear and anxiety as to the result.

And, indeed, the various designations given in the Scriptures to this enemy, have a tendency to perpetuate the same emotions. He is styled "the great red dragon," because he has immured myriads in the horrid dungeon of darkness, and by his emissaries has shed the blood of all the martyrs from the time of righteous Abel till now : and because he will be the prime agent of casting away every soul that shall finally perish, he is also styled "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." As to the power of the adversary, we are obliged to acknowledge that it is mysteriously and incomprehensibly great. In the book of Job, it is recorded that at the instigation of Satan the Sabeans took away the cattle of that righteous Arab, and slew his servants : at the instigation of Satan also, the Chaldeans greatly distressed Job : by his command too, fire descended from heaven, which consumed his flocks, while a great wind from the wilderness smote the four corners of the house where Job's children were feasting, so that it fell and crushed them to death. How amazing, then, the power of this spiritual foe ! How earnestly you should desire deliverance from his galling yoke ! This enemy is designated also "the god of this world," because he overcomes the greater part of it: in fact he has more subjects under his authority than any monarch on earth. He excels beside in subtlety as well as in power and malice : he is "the old serpent" which deceiveth the world. St. John describes him as having seven heads and ten horns ; which signifies at least that his power and subtlety are amazingly great. "He reaches out his tail," says the same inspired penman, "and pulls down the stars of heaven, and casteth them to the earth." That is, those shining lamps and lights in the Christian church, who have emitted the greatest lustre, have sometimes had, through the success of his designs, the beauty and glory of their character impaired. In this sense Noah was cast down by him to the earth ; and Moses David, and other eminent believers : and thus he attempted to triumph over Simon Peter, and would have effected his malevolent purpose had not a mightier than he interposed. "Simon, Simon," said our Lord, "Satan hath desired

to have thee, that he might sift thee as wheat ; but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." O blessed and glorious Intercessor ! What everlasting praises are due to him for the displays of his love, the extension of his saving power ! You must pass into a happy eternity ere you can know the frequency, the efficacy of his merciful interpositions.

But having drawn your attention to the most subtle and formidable of your opponents, suffer me to guard you against the chief assistants of the angel of the bottomless pit in his destructive enterprise. These are the world and the flesh.

By the *world*, I would have you understand the ungodly men it contains ; infidels, sabbath-breakers, drunkards, swearers ; yea, all the children of disobedience. These are under the sway of Satan and greatly aid him in his destructive career. In many cases they may not be conscious of the vassalage to which they have subjected themselves ; yet his servants they are ; and, alas, they are successful to an awful extent in ensnaring and decoying precious souls into the gulf ruin. Have you not known instances of individuals amid the sorrows of life and in the hour of death tracing all their misery to their ungodly associates, recurring with horror to the moment when they were first introduced to them, and bitterly lamenting their folly and impiety in listening to their seductive counsels ? How many guilty, wretched beings are there at this moment who can point to certain individuals, to whom they were introduced in early life, and say, Had it not been for your pernicious advice and example, instead of ranking among the most impious and depraved of the human race, I might have been among the most prosperous, the most happy. Thus the sceptic and profane are great obstacles in the way of the soul's salvation : their destructive influence appears to be referred to in the ninth chapter of this book, where the angel of the bottomless pit is said to lead forth the immense army of two hundred thousand men, who had a commission to traverse the earth and destroy the inhabitants thereof. Thus the men of the world are leagued with Satan against your interests. I beseech each of you, especially the young, to pay the most sedulous regard to the society you keep. " If sinners entice thee," as you value your soul, as you fear the wrath of Almighty God, as you desire the joys of heaven, and deprecate the miseries of perdition, " consent not." Listen to the voice which says, " Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing ; and I will be a Father unto you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord God Almighty."

But the riches, honours, and pleasures of the world are made use of by Satan to betray immortal souls, as well as abandoned, and profligate men ; and by these baits he succeeds to an affecting extent, seconded by his suggestions and agency. Riches ensnare the covetous, pleasure inflames the voluptuous, vanity elates the proud, glory fires the ambitious ; until the claims of Revelation are neglected, and all the momentous interests of the soul and eternity disregarded. O fatal delusion ! That beings capable of unceasing happiness should choose for their portion that which is emphatically vanity of vanities—that which perishes in the using—that which being inordinately regarded will enhance the misery of the sinner's death-bed, and augment his terrors in the dread day of judgment and decision ! Cherish then, I entreat you, all holy solicitude to escape this snare of theowler. " Love not the world, nor the things of the world ; for if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." Remember Demas, who, embracing the world, was separated from the abode of the holy and the blessed. Think of Judas, who, through covetous

ness, betrayed his Lord and Master, then hanged himself, and afterward went to his own place. Reflect I say on these examples (and alas! they might be multiplied to an indefinite extent), while the benign admonition of heaven addresses itself to you—"Be not conformed to the world; but be ye transformed in the renewing of your minds." "For what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

The other great opponent to your spiritual happiness, and an eminent assistant of the arch adversary, is the *flesh*, or the inbred corruption of your own hearts. A defiling influence is spread over the innermost recesses of your spirit; every faculty is depraved and impure. On this mass of impurity within Satan operates. Hence out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, blasphemies, and every thing that defileth a man.

Your position, then, is one of fearful responsibility, and eminent exposure. There are evil principles within you, that, like so many competitors for a throne, eagerly pant for the ascendancy. These are ignited and fanned into a flame by the spirit of darkness: the flesh lusteth against the spirit, enticing the eyes to behold, the ears to attend to, foolish and trifling amusements; constraining the hands to work all manner of wickedness, and causing the feet to deviate from the paths of virtue and holiness. Who has not felt the rising of impure desire, the workings of envy and of pride? Who has not experienced the instigation of the adversary to every thing opposed to the purity and safety of the immortal soul, and contrary to the command of the infinite Jehovah? Inquire of the most circumspect, the most devout, and with deep self-abasement they will tell you, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." Inquire of him who came nearest to the standard of Christian perfection of any mortal, and was even favoured with a glimpse of heaven's glories, and you will hear him affirm, "I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, there dwelleth no good thing."

But why need I ask you to inquire of others? I call upon you to look into your own minds; review your past life, and say, have you not experienced the rising of unhallowed emotions? Have you not conceived and cherished schemes of iniquity which you have perpetrated, the remembrance of which fills you with shame and self-indignation? And can you fail of being conscious that the seeds of sin are still within you, and that they may yet plunge you into greater depths of depravity? In fine, that the torrent of evil within you endangers your final salvation, and that unless it be resisted, and the influence of Satan upon it thwarted and overcome, that salvation is utterly unattainable? Set a watch, then, upon thyself. It is the injunction of the glorious Captain of salvation. "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life."

Having exhibited the principal enemies enlisted against you, I enter now on a more pleasing theme, to unfold to you, secondly, THE MEANS FOR THEIR SUBJUGATION. For although they are truly formidable on account of their number, power, cruelty, and subtlety, they are not invincible. Blessed be the Lord God they may be restrained, they can be overcome. The text supposes the possibility of their overthrow; and the fact is indisputable that unnumbered myriads, once as frail and feeble as yourselves, have contested with them and come off more than conquerors. Raise the eye of faith, and you may see them basking in the brightness of eternal day, crowned with the crown of life, handling palms of victory and sceptres of royalty.

Justified therefore, by their experience, and the direct declarations of the leader and commander of his people, I remark, first, In order to foil your opponents, *you must be arrayed in the armour of righteousness*. Sin has rendered you vulnerable at every point, nay, it has left you naked and defenceless. Hence the indispensable necessity of being girt with the armour of salvation. The pencil of inspiration has furnished a most impressive description of that armour, and of your duty in reference to it: "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand. Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." The import of this figurative language is, that a personal experience of the blessings of salvation, and a daily and hourly living upon them, is essential to success. It is not speculating about this armour, not listening to the description of it from others, nor describing it yourselves, that will achieve the triumph: it must be put on. He that would satiate his thirst must drink of the refreshing stream; he that would allay his hunger must eat the provision prepared; and he that would carry off the immortal prize must grapple with the foe, and be clothed with the panoply of heaven.

I intend not now to enter into a minute description of this invaluable armour, but shall confine your attention to the most distinguished parts of it. Look first then at "the shield of faith;" a weapon of amazing utility, which whoever wields shall conquer. The shield of faith leads to victory, as the exercise of it honours the veracity of the Omnipotent Leader of Israel; as it inspires the soul with more than mortal energy, as it is the appointed instrument of bringing help and salvation from the everlasting hills, and as it cannot be pierced even by the fiery darts of the wicked one. I speak now of strong faith—of faith divinely energized, in which there is a kind of Christian omnipotence. Under the influence of this faith the soldier of the cross will face the foe and say, "Rejoice not over me, O mine enemy, for though I fall I shall rise again, and though I walk in darkness, a bright and everlasting light shall beam around me." If the enemy should tempt the Christian soldier to sensual indulgence, his faith will realize an omniscient, an omnipresent God, and he will mentally exclaim, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" and thus will he break the snare. If the tempter should suggest and exhibit the riches and honours of the world, his faith will embrace the riches and honours of eternity, and under its influence he will pant for their possession. Hence he repels the tempter with holy indignation, saying, "I count all things but dung and dross for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, by which I am crucified to the world and the world unto me." Or imagine the accuser aiming to impress his mind with a conviction that crimes such as his can never be obliterated or forgiven: having the

shield of faith, he feels persuaded that God for Christ's sake will be merciful to his unrighteousness, and remember his sins no more. Thus by faith he not only wards off the blow designed for his destruction, but triumphs in his turn. Go into an examination of the records of inspiration, and you will see how departed heroes of the cross triumphed, being invested with the shield of faith. Through faith of worlds to come they walked through deserts dark as night. Read Hebrews, xi. and you will see what this heavenly instrument has been honoured to effect. Be assured there is no victory for you but by this celestial weapon. To him that believeth, all things are possible ; and he shall not be ashamed, confounded, or destroyed, world without end.

Do you, then, believe on the Son of God ? Have you fled to Jesus ? Have you that principle that works by love, that purifies the heart, that enters into heaven itself, bringing supplies from the very court of paradise ? Only believe, and you are on the road to celestial triumph ; only believe, and you are more than a match for your most dreaded foe : for by faith the worm Jacob shall thresh the mountains : only believe, and you will gather laurels every hour ; only believe, and you will soon see the glory of the third heaven ; and like Christian in the house of the Interpreter, you will hear a pleasant voice, even the voice of the angel of the everlasting covenant, saying,

“ Come in, Come in,  
Eternal glory thou shalt win.”

But without faith it is utterly impossible to succeed. The unbeliever and the infidel shall be destroyed with a sore destruction : enter not then on the perilous strife ; expect not the victory except you feel assured that the ever blessed Immanuel is the all of your dependence, delight, and desire.

But the armoury of the skies contains another weapon of great efficacy. “ Take,” says the Apostle, “ the helmet of salvation ;” or as he puts it in 1 Thessalonians, “ Take for an helmet the hope of salvation :” a piece of armour this of singular advantage ; even in ordinary engagements that section of the combatants that are full of hope are much more likely to succeed than those who are paralyzed with fear and despondency. But never had any earthly combatant such ground for hope as the spiritual warrior. With him are all the promises, perfections, and resources of the Most High. His cause how righteous ; his friends and allies how numerous and dignified ; his adversaries how vile and abominable ! O soldier of the Lord ! take for an helmet the hope of salvation : do not be discouraged by present appearances, however apparently adverse. The foe may harass you in many directions ; unexpected difficulties may arise ; you may have to cross many a dark valley, to ascend many a steep hill, to bear many a burden ; and oft you may be harassed with the thought that your glorious Leader has forsaken you and left you alone to bear the burden and heat of the day. But judge nothing before the time. Recollect the Captain of your salvation is immutable in his love, infinitely wise and gracious, and has all power in heaven and on earth. Forget not also the deliverances already wrought for you, and those accomplished in your brethren who, having crossed Jordan's narrow stream, know the pleasantness of the conqueror's song. Refresh, I say, your spirit by these considerations, and hope to the end for the grace that shall be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

You see the value then of this piece of armour. It protects and lifts up the

head in the day of battle. As the view of home animates the weary traveller, or the sight of the harbour enlivens the tempest-tossed mariner, so the helmet of salvation enlivens and cheers the combatant for a spiritual crown. It is so highly esteemed by him that he would not relinquish it for all that earth calls good or great. He is never more qualified for the conflict, or happy in its prosecution, than when looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and his Saviour, Jesus Christ. With Paul, he knows what it is to be saved by hope, for hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost given unto him. Is your hope, then, derived from and directed to the living God? If so, cherish and foster it by every means in your power. It will enable you to say, even when for the moment you are worsted and your enemies are beginning to shout their diabolical triumph, "I shall not die, but live, and declare the goodness of the Lord." Soldier of the cross, having this helmet, fight on, and if by reason of the arduous nature of the contest you begin to falter and decline, then revive and chide yourself, as did a Christian warrior in ancient times: "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance and my God."

But if any of you are unacquainted with this helmet and unanxious for its acquisition, then you are without God in the world, and have neither the prospect nor assurance of success; and remaining and dying in this state the foe will grasp you at last and bear you away to a state where your sufferings will be indescribable and unceasing.

But I exhibit to you another part of this armour of righteousness, and one of transcendent excellence. I refer to "the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." Our blessed Lord used this weapon against the tempter in the wilderness, with divine and complete success, and his people in every age have found it to be eminently efficient and powerful: for while it successfully parries the thrusts of the foe, it strengthens the hand and solaces the heart of him that uses it. "I had perished in mine affliction," said David, "unless thy law had been my delight; I will never forget thy precepts, for with them thou hast quickened me." Thus this sword qualifies for the conflict and crowns with victory too; use this celestial weapon aright and your triumphs will be manifold and complete. "The word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the dividing asunder of the joints and the marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." It is moreover "mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds, and the casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

That you may discern the invaluable properties of this piece of armour, imagine the Christian warrior tempted to pride and ambition. He unsheathes his sword and reads engraven thereon, "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." Surveying and believing this, the temptation passes away. Or suppose him tempted to anger and revenge, he looks again at the heaven-attempered instrument, and sees the inscription, "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good;" "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath." These inscriptions check the evil suggestions, and by their influence he is enabled to do good to them that despitefully use him. Or suppose the Christian

soldier harassed with the thought that he has fallen short of the promises through unbelief; he turns to the word of God, and cries with one of old, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief;" and supported by the immutable promises of divine love, though faint he continues pursuing. Or does the enemy intimate to him that it is immaterial what his thoughts and feelings are, if he but strictly attend to the forms of religion? He repels this device of his grand adversary by citing the inscription legibly engraven on the sword divine grace has bestowed: "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." Or does the crafty foe urge upon his attention his manifold deviations and transgressions? He turns to the word of God, and finds a cordial against despair in such blessed promises as these: "Come now, and let us reason together: though your sins are as scarlet I will make them white as snow, and though red as crimson they shall be as wool:" "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." Thus by the sword of the Spirit he chases a thousand, and puts ten thousand to flight: he goes on from conquering to conquer, until he exchanges the sword for the wreath of victory.

Let me urge it upon you, then, that are fighting the battles of the Lord, to place unlimited confidence in this weapon. It is the product of Omniscient skill, and with it you may fearlessly face the hosts of darkness. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, and you shall often subscribe to the sentiments of the Psalmist, "Thy statutes have been my song in the house of my pilgrimage." "O blessed Lord, who hath caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning, grant that we may in such wise read them, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and comfort of thy holy word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life which thou hast given to us in our Saviour Jesus Christ." If you would be crowned with victory, consider the address delivered to Joshua as directed to yourself. "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein; for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success."

[In addition to the shield of faith, the hope of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, the weapon of *prayer* must be called into requisition. This weapon terribly affrights Satan; he "trembles when he sees the weakest saint upon his knees." ] And while it alarms the enemy, it strengthens and brightens every other part of the armour of salvation. Prayer in faith has performed many wonderful and stupendous prodigies. It has opened the windows of heaven, and refreshed the parched and barren soil with plentiful showers of rain. It has caused water to gush from the flinty rock, has given sight to the blind, cleansed lepers, healed the sick, raised the dead, and convulsed the earth, opening gates of iron, transmitting imprisoned spirits to a joyful and glorious liberty. In short, it has brought the Holy Spirit from the bosom of the Father, through whose divine agency there has been realized a "peace that passeth all understanding," a "joy unspeakable and full of glory." So that the great secret of success consists in "praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit." Would you triumph, then, you must cling to the horns of the altar, must give yourself to the word of God and prayer. Like the vestals, you must live at the altar.

Such are the instrumental means of victory: the direct and immediate cause of a successful termination of the contest is the power and grace of the adorable

Redeemer, the inhabitation, guidance, and renewing energy of the Holy Spirit. That declaration of our Lord, "Without me ye can do nothing," is ever true in its application to the Christian soldier. Look then to Jesus, your glorious Leader, your unceasing Advocate above. It has pleased the Father that in him all fulness should dwell, that you out of his fulness might receive grace for grace. Never cease entreating that he would keep you by his mighty power through faith unto salvation; for his all-sufficient aid is graciously promised, and has never been withheld when sincerely sought. When the enemy cometh in like a flood, he can lift up an effectual standard against him; and however powerful and oft-repeated the temptation, he can deliver you out of it. I dare not promise you the least portion of success unless you are distrusting yourselves and relying on an Almighty Saviour: to triumph you must live by faith on the Son of God, must commune with invisible and eternal realities, must ever desire and value the grace of the divine Spirit, by whom the feeble become as David, and David as the angel of the Lord. In this way the Church triumphant has attained its sublime elevation, and, conscious of their unceasing indebtedness to their divine Deliverer, they cast their crowns at his feet, unitedly exclaiming, "Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and that hath made us kings and priests unto God and the Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever."

Having shewn you the path to victory, I place before you, thirdly, THE FELICITY CONSEQUENT UPON THE OVERTHROW OF YOUR ENEMIES. "He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death." The glory of heaven is much more frequently described in negative than in affirmative terms. You are taught that there is no night, no pain, no care, no death there; but you are not so directly taught what *is* there. "Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man to conceive, what God has prepared for those that love him." And of all the negative descriptions of the saints' future dignity and glory, there are few that are more sublime and spirit-stirring than that in the text. Enlisted under the banner of the cross, your spirit shall not be hurt of the second death. The day of judgment will present the affecting scene of many at the left hand of the Judge, who shall be adjudged to that terrific doom, "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness, where there is weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth;" but the victorious saint shall be exempt from that condemnation. The ages of eternity will unfold the agonizing scene of the guilty and impenitent host of sinners suffering where the worm dieth not, where the fire is not quenched; but the conquering believer shall never pass into that abyss of woe. The sufferings of the lost in hell are described by the term "second death," to intimate to you the eminence and perpetuity of their sufferings. The first death that sinners experience, the death they suffer in this world, is always unattended with the light of the divine countenance and the scriptural hope of immortal bliss; and is in some instances connected with remorse the most bitter, and suffering the most intense. But this is soon over; then comes the second death, tribulation, wrath and anguish, separation from the throne of God, the glory of heaven, the bliss of eternity; the sorrows of a full cup are wrung out to them: it is the second death, the unceasing experience of the most intense agony. Girt with the armour of salvation, fighting on the Lord's side, you shall escape all this.

As there are, however, but two states, if the soldier of the cross is not to be hurt of the second death, the delightful conclusion is at once apparent: he shall be ushered into eternal life. Indeed he is not hurt by the first death, the death he suffers in this world: in his case to die is gain; absent from the body he is present with the Lord. Such is the sublime recompense accruing to the Christian warrior. Was ever recompense more animating, more glorious? To be exempt from every species of suffering, to have access to all the sources of joy, to occupy a mansion in the city of the living God, to possess the wreath of victory in association with the pure, the spiritual, the holy; to grasp the sceptre of royalty in the imperishable kingdom of the Most High; to sit with the ever-blessed Jesus on his bright celestial throne, as he also has overcome, and is set down at the right hand of his Father? these are the fruits of holy perseverance.

Arise, then, Christian, and pursue thine heaven-ward way: thy glorious Captain calls thee to conquest and a crown. Hear his gracious voice, follow in his steps. Remember he has promised, and is able and willing to support and strengthen you, and make you more than conqueror. Then humbly, fervently, implore the power of His arm, the communication of His grace, who is omnipotent to save and bless. Be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Quit yourselves like men; assured at no distant day the crown of life shall be thine to wear and enjoy. Those holy intelligences that minister to the heirs of salvation, shall bear thy spirit through the fields of space into the third heavens. The everlasting doors shall fly open; the eternal gates be lifted up; thou shalt breathe the air of paradise: the harps of the redeemed and glorified shall greet thee; thou shalt be arrayed in a garment of immortal beauty; the fruits of immortality, gathered from the tree of life, shall be set before thee; you shall possess undecaying energy, and be declared the heir of an incorruptible inheritance: the complacent smile of your glorious Saviour will rest upon you: his heavenly voice you will hear, saying, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord. Behold I will make thee a pillar in the temple of my God, to go no more out for ever; and I will confess thy name before my Father, and before his holy angels." What a consummation! Who would not struggle a few short days to inherit so rich a reward, to wear for ever so bright a diadem?

It is to this holy conflict and with the assurance of this recompense I now in the name of the King eternal, immortal, and invisible, invite you; I call upon you while you live to oppose moral evil in all its forms and modifications; to glorify God that you may enjoy him for ever. Abstaining from this conflict, your profession of religion is a fallacy and a dream; for the promises of heavenly grace are made only to the warring and overcoming. Abstaining from this conflict, ere long you will be hurt of the second death; you will sink into its horrid darkness, realize its bitter pains; from your anguished spirit the piercing exclamation will be extorted, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and I am not saved." But fighting this good fight of faith, your success is certain, your recompense inconceivably great. Take up the weapons of the holy war, then; add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge temperance, and to temperance godliness; so an entrance shall be administered to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

## TIMES OF REFRESHING FROM THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD.

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REV. W. B. LEACH,

ROBERT STREET CHAPEL, GROSVENOR SQUARE.

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"Times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord."—ACTS, iii. 19.

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THE lovely religion of Christ, whilst addressed to the understanding, expands and exhilarates the best feelings of the heart. Derived from Him in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and who is full of grace and truth, it comes to us, not merely as a system of doctrines and morals bearing the broad seal of divine authority, and the force of the most convincing evidence, but it is so benignly constituted, that with all the sublimity of a most beautiful science, it addresses itself to every man's bosom, and is adapted to every rank, condition, and event. Thus it becomes a source of the highest joy to us both in this world and in that which is to come, leading us to the fountain of light, life, and love, imparting a good hope through grace which is like an anchor to the soul both sure and steadfast, and placing full in our view the bright, attractive outline of the "far more exceeding, and eternal weight of glory" which lies beyond the grave, and which emanates from the inheritance of the saints in light. Hence godliness is profitable unto all things having the promise of the life which now is and of that which is to come, thereby forming a way of pleasantness and peace, and leading to a glorious consummation in a blessed immortality. What that consummation will be, is but partially disclosed, and that by visional representations and figurative allusions; as eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. We may, however, venture to conclude, that though we contemplate the heavenly state through a glass darkly, yet, as it is the abode of God and the Lamb, the home of angels who have never sinned, and the celestial crown of our discipleship, it will infinitely exceed our most enlarged expectations.

But notwithstanding the interposing veil which separates the heavenly world from our mean abode who dwell in houses of clay, and which prevents the prying eye of curiosity from gazing too intently upon the Holy of holies, there are some beams of glory which shine upon that veil with so much brightness from *within*, that we enjoy the reflection even here *without* in the church below, for "in God's light we see light," and "light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart." Thus as the children of Israel had a fore-taste of the productions of the promised land, even before they reached it, by the grapes of Eschol, which were brought to them in the wilderness, so it is the peculiar privilege of the saints, as fellow heirs of the grace of life, to enjoy

prelusions of future bliss by “times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.”

*What those times of refreshing are we shall now endeavour to describe—reminding you of the source in which they originate, of their vast importance, and of the way in which they should be sought and improved.* And O that the divine Spirit, who descends “like rain upon the new-mown grass, and like the showers that water the earth,” may condescend to favour us with such a season of refreshing this morning.

First, the phrase which is here rendered “Times of refreshing,” some have imagined might be read, “Times of cooling,” in allusion to the custom of labourers, especially in eastern countries, of retiring to the cooling shade, during the heat of the day, to recruit their exhausted strength, and thereby to refresh themselves. And what are these hallowed hours to us, whether on the week days or on the Sabbath, but times of cooling and refreshing, affording an agreeable pause amid the busy scenes of life—enabling us to retire from the sun to the shade—from the burden and heat of the day to his blessed presence who is recognized as “the shadow of a great rock in a weary land?” Ah! my brethren, the world is a weary land in which we take many a weary step as way-worn travellers, going to the heavenly Canaan, or as fellow-labourers in society and in the church. And though we would not be unmindful of the admonition to “work while it is called to-day,” either in “providing things honest in the sight of all men,” or “working out our salvation with fear and trembling,” or in “serving our generation according to the will of God,” by habits and acts of usefulness; yet it is trying and toilsome both to the flesh and to the spirit. We want, therefore, occasional rest. We require relaxation when, by waiting upon the Lord beneath the peaceful shade of his cross, we can “renew our strength.” Well, the Sabbath rolls round and affords it. And thus hailing it as such both to the body and the mind, we can sing,

“ How welcome to the saints, when press'd  
With six days' noise, and care, and toil,  
Is the returning day of rest  
Which hides them from the world awhile.”

This is a most acceptable cessation of the cares and anxieties of life. It permits us to lay aside the multifarious implements of mental or secular employment: to relax our outstretched energies, to cool the fever of the brain, and to retire to a refreshing shade. Such a retreat is furnished by the Gospel of the grace of God. Here grows the “tree of life,” of which the grateful Church exclaims, “As the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, (a beautiful object whether covered with blossoms or laden with fruit) so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with delight, and his fruit was sweet unto my taste.” Here gently rolls “the river of the waters of life,” “whose streams make glad the city of God.” Here rises in glorious majesty “the Rock of ages,” to which David wished to repair when he prayed, “When my heart is overwhelmed within me lead me to the Rock which is higher than I.” And here is “the Holy One in the midst of us,” who has been “a strength to the poor and a strength to the needy in his distress.” And “he that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.” O what an unspeakable mercy to have such a retreat, and such

supplies in "this dry and thirsty land!" To have such a peaceful shade so near at hand, so high, so wide, so commodious: where there is room enough and to spare; in which we can enjoy, like Moses upon the mount of Pisgah, the most cheering prospects of the promised land, and in which we can sit down and indulge in the most profitable meditations and reflections! Here, like Nathaniel under the fig-tree, we can review all "the way in which the Lord our God hath led us;" and *that* is refreshing. Here we can contemplate the unfolded mysteries of redeeming love; and *that* is refreshing. We can inspect the work of grace in the heart; and *that* is refreshing. We can look into the promises and examine the covenant which is "ordered in all things and sure;" and *that* is refreshing. We can think of heaven, the place of our destination; and *that* is "refreshing." No wonder that the weary, wandering Church of Christ should cry,

" Where is the shadow of that rock  
Which from the sun defends thy flock?  
Fain would I feed among thy sheep,  
Among them rest, among them sleep."

Secondly, times of refreshment, in the common acceptation of the term, denote *seasons of refection*, periods of repast, when persons enjoy a little cessation from the labour of the hand or of the head, to eat and to drink. This, in English phraseology, is called taking refreshment. Here the figure is also capable of a spiritual accommodation, and is applicable to the people of God and to the ordinances of the Gospel. That the renewed soul has an appetite as well as the body, I trust we all feel. And that the blessings of salvation are adapted to our necessities requires no ingenuity to prove. What says the promise? "In this mountain shall the Lord of Hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined." To these rich provisions we have constant access. Here is food for all—"bread enough and to spare," and the whole in pleasing variety. Here is "the sincere milk of the word" for those who, from the incipiency of their religious state, are "babes in Christ." And here is the heavenly manna, the good wine of the kingdom, the fruits of the Tree of Life, and the living water embosomed in the wells of salvation, or flowing from the chrystal fountain of Redeeming love; whilst, grateful for such supplies, we sing,

" The food on which thy children live,  
Great God, is thine alone to give:  
And we for grace received would raise  
Immortal songs of joy and praise.

" How vast, how full, how rich, how free,  
Dear Jesus, are thy grace and thee!  
To the full fountain of our joys,  
We gladly come for fresh supplies."

What a mercy that we are *permitted* to come! What a mercy that we have *an inclination* to come! So that whilst others "with one consent begin to make excuse" when invited to the Gospel feast, and "would rather starve than come," we can sweetly realize, by a little change of the metaphor, the pastoral promise made by the good Shepherd to his flock, in which he says, "They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places; they

shall not hunger nor thirst, neither shall the heat nor the sun smite them; for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them."

Thirdly, There is still another definition which we may affix to the text. "Times of refreshing" are indicated in nature by times of *humidity, softening, and moisture*, when the genial showers or refreshing dews saturate and revive the thirsty bosom of vegetation. This was the idea which suggested itself to my mind when I first glanced at the passage. It occurred when beholding the welcome rain so long looked for, so much needed after a protracted season of drought. I marked and admired the rich abundance and the steady copiousness with which it descended. I knew how truly acceptable the boon would be to thousands, especially in agricultural pursuits, and in dry situations. I knew how much our meadows, gardens, and corn-fields required it; how the delighted husbandman would smile and congratulate, and how improved and fertile the face of nature would appear after such a "time of refreshment." I thought of the guilty land of Israel, upon which there was neither rain nor dew for three years and a half. I thought of our entire dependence upon God, of our obligations to him, of the ease and variety of ways in which he can bless or punish us, and of the grateful language of the Psalmist who, recognizing and acknowledging the hand of the Most High in every dispensation, said, "Thou, O Lord, hast sent a plentiful rain, whereby thou didst confirm thine inheritance when it was weary." Then gliding from the soil to the soul, from the world to the Church, from the sign to the thing signified, I thought of the refreshing influences of the Holy Ghost, which "come down like rain upon the new-mown grass, and as the showers which water the earth." And O how valuable, how welcome are these heavenly showers! How they refresh the soul of the minister, who having sown the good seed of the word, is anxious to see "the blade, the ear, and the full corn in the ear!" How they revive the spirit of the people whose graces open and expand like "trees planted by the rivers of water!" What a happy effect they have upon our religious institutions! What a sweet perfume, as a "savour of life unto life," do they produce, as you find in a garden after a refreshing shower! And what a beautiful bow upon "the cloud of our mercies as in the day of rain," do they impress, when they descend in concert with the Sun of Righteousness, like "the bow of promise mid the storm." "The rain also filleth the pools." Yes, wherever there is a church or a heart open to receive the blessing from on high, it shall not remain empty.

Let us now pass from *the season* to **THE SOURCE WHENCE THESE BLESSINGS SPRING**: "The presence of the Lord." This renders them *doubly* valuable. The gift is enhanced by the love which we bear to the Giver, especially when we recollect his motive, the way in which our supplies have been procured, the medium through which they descend, the impossibility of procuring others of equal worth as a substitute, our unworthiness of being thus refreshed in the wilderness, and "the fulness of joy and the pleasures for evermore" of which these gracious communications are the pledge and the earnest. These "times of refreshment," then, you perceive, come "*from the presence of the Lord*," as the pool of Bethesda was rendered medicinal by the presence of the angel. As the bitter waters of Mara became sweet by the influence of the tree which

was cast into them ; or as the sorrowing disciples were made glad by the presence of the Redeemer ; and the hearts of the two mourners going to Emmaus were comforted by their intercourse with Jesus, who conversed with them by the way, and opened to them the Scriptures.

That the blessed God *is* present with his people whenever and wherever they meet together in his name, requires no strength of argument, no subtlety of reasoning to prove. He has promised, “ in all places where I record my name will I come unto you and bless you.” *That* promise to a believer is sufficient. The minister is encouraged by it, so is the hearer ; for where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. It is the promise of *God* : of *him* who cannot lie and will not repent ; and the testimony of frequent experience proves the truth of the assertion : “ He *is* nigh unto them that call upon him even unto all that call upon him in truth.” He *does* glorify the house of his glory by manifesting himself, by holding communion with us from off the mercy-seat, in the conversion of sinners and building up his people upon their most holy faith.” Hence we cry, “ One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple.” It gives an impulse to our petitions and expectations. We come and implore the tokens of his presence by the refreshing influences of his Spirit, and we are encouraged to conclude that we shall not pray in vain. Past excites future hope, and thus we declare, “ Because thou *hast* been my help, therefore under the shadow of thy wings will I trust,” and we still believe that “ where two or three are gathered together in the Redeemer’s name, He will be in the midst of them, and that to bless them.” All our springs of hope and comfort are therefore in Him ; the *fountains* flow from Him, the *source*, and return again to Him, the *consummation*. Hence, while favoured with our “ times of refreshment,” and recollecting whence they proceed and how they are formed, we exult,

“ Nor earth, nor all the sky,  
Can one delight afford ;  
No, not a drop of real joy,  
Without thy presence, Lord.

“ Thou art the Sea of Love,  
Where all my pleasures roll ;  
The circle where my passions move,  
And centre of my soul.”

Secondly, Or the expression may refer to the heavenly world as the original source of all our supplies, as every good and every perfect gift cometh down from above. But though that “ better country” contains the *full fruition* of spiritual and immortal blessings in all their inexhaustible copiousness, in all their variety, perfection, and adaptation, so pure, so satisfying, so permanent, these celestial springs are not *confined* to the world of spirits. They flow onward there in the ample, placid channel of “ the river of the water of life, clear as chrystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb : ” but they flow downward here to refresh the Church below. Hence we pray,

“ Send comforts down from thy right hand,  
Whilst we pass through this barren land ;  
And in thy temple let us see  
A glimpse of love, a glimpse of thee.”

And the answer is graciously returned, in “times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.”

Let us now reflect for a moment upon THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING FAVOURED WITH THOSE REFRESHING SEASONS. This may be judged of by comparison. What would the earth be without the genial showers which water it, but a desert? Whatever might be the skill or labour of husbandry, the grass would not grow for the cattle: our harvest-fields would lie waste, and no longer “yield seed to the sower,” nor bread to the eater: our gardens would wither and burn: our trees would look black and sear; and famine, pestilence, starvation, and death would inevitably ensue. How was it with the land of Israel? Thus it would be in our Churches without divine influences. The ministers of the Gospel, like the diligent husbandman, might “break up the fallow ground, and scatter the precious seed,” but it would not germinate; it would not grow. We should “labour in vain, and spend our strength for nought.” But when the Spirit is poured out from on high, “the wilderness shall bud and blossom as the rose.” “There shall be a handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains, the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon.” The Holy Ghost is the fruitful source of vital religion. Without his fructifying graces, instructions are unproductive, invitations are unproductive; warnings, judgments, mercies, miracles—all, all are unproductive. But when he descends, “like showers of heavenly rain,” the simplest means produce the noblest effects. And as the Holy Spirit *produces* vital religion where it has never existed before, so he *revives* it where it has withered, *strengthens* it where it is weak, and *beautifies, expands, and causes it to unfold*, where it has been contracted and confined. If, then, we would enjoy prosperous Churches, and souls beautified and fruitful, let us seek to be richly imbued with the Holy Ghost. Why did Lot prefer a residence upon the plain of Sodom? Because it was well watered. May this be the privileged condition of our Churches—“like well-watered gardens.” Why was Stephen chosen as one of the seven deacons? Because he was a “man full of the Holy Ghost.” May we thus be “filled with the Spirit” so as to “live in the Spirit,” “walk in the Spirit,” and “pray with the Spirit,” for “as many as are led by the Spirit they are the Sons of God.”

Thus we see the value and importance of divine influences, and hence it will be desirable to ascertain HOW THESE TIMES OF REFRESHING ARE TO BE OBTAINED. To this I answer,

In the *first* place, by a conviction of their value. This is requisite to give a proper impulse to our solicitude, that whilst others are favoured with the heavenly shower we may earnestly desire to be enriched with all wisdom and spiritual understanding. Until this conviction be produced, we shall be barren and unfruitful in the knowledge of God our Saviour, and remain lamentably satisfied with the moral dearth, although the soul may resemble a forlorn and neglected waste.

*Secondly*, Fervent and persevering prayer is indispensable. We must ask in order that we may receive, we must seek that we may find, and knock that we may obtain a favourable opening. Prayer moves the hand which moves the world. For the blessings which we require the Lord will be sought unto,

we are therefore exhorted to come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in the time of need. And "if ye being evil know how to give good things unto your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" "Ask, therefore, and receive, that your joy may be full."

*Thirdly,* Prayer and supplication for these refreshing communications must be followed by an avoidance of those inconsistencies and declensions in our Christian character as religious communities or as individuals, which are likely to "grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom we are sealed unto the day of redemption." Nothing has a greater tendency to induce the Spirit of the Lord to withhold his gracious influences than a state of religious decay, indicated by lukewarmness, neglect of the life and power of personal godliness, conformity to the world, or by any direct violation of the practical requirements of Christ's holy Gospel. Such palpable inconsistencies, which bring religion into contempt, or which injure the tone of experimental piety, even if there be no visible slur upon our public character, the Holy Ghost will not connive at. And if we thus offend our heavenly Benefactor, we shall soon have to cry, "The Comforter which should relieve my soul is far from me." Let us then earnestly seek, highly prize, and devoutly improve, the refreshing seasons of which we have spoken, that it may be well with us, and that our profiting may appear unto all men.

We may also learn from the subject of *how much importance the refreshing religion of Christ is to us in the present world.* What is the character of the world? A waste howling wilderness, a thorny maze, an enemy's country, a vale of tears. What is our *condition* in this desert land? Let Job answer: "Man that is born of a woman is of few days and full of sorrows." Or as good old Jacob said, "Few and evil have been the days of the years of my pilgrimage." But O what solace does the Gospel of the Redeemer afford. Hear the testimony of David: "In the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion; in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me upon a rock." Hear the testimony of Paul: "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; cast down, but not destroyed." Or, as our Lord said, "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but in me ye shall have peace." *That* peace is imparted by times of refreshing from his holy presence. We enter our closet, we pour out the desires and sorrows of our hearts at the mercy-seat. There we are refreshed. We read the word of God, we bring our feelings into contact with those inspired pages. There we are refreshed. We enter the sanctuary, we go to the wells of salvation. There we are refreshed. We look at the dispensations of Providence with the eye of faith, and in humble dependence upon the teaching of the Holy Ghost, and there we are refreshed. Thus the Christian stands where the worldling sinks, or the mere professor deserts the post of duty. "These endure but for a season, and in the time of temptation fall away."

Finally, If such be the importance and advantages of these refreshing showers of divine grace, *how great must be your destitution who have not the Spirit of Christ*, and consequently are none of his? You, my dear brethren, are like wells without water, trees without verdure, clouds without rain, scattered by the tempest. You have to suffer without divine support; to carry your burdens in your own strength: and, what is worse still, your souls are in imminent

danger of being lost, lost for ever. Your sins, which are many, are not pardoned: your hearts are not renewed by the power of the Holy Ghost; you are living only for the world; and at length you and your portion must sink to rise no more. O then think what you lose by neglecting the great salvation, and what you incur by your indifference to the imperious claims of the Gospel of Christ. And if your destitution is such in the *present* life, what will be your state in that great day when Christ shall come to judge the world in righteousness—"in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God and obey not his holy Gospel, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe." Flee, then, from the wrath to come. Escape for your life. Look not behind you. Flee to the mountain, to the cross of Christ, lest you perish in the way, when the wrath of the Lord, like a sweeping pestilence shall terribly desolate the earth.

## THE JOY OF ANGELS IN THE CONVERSION OF SINNERS.

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REV. R. NEWTON,

GREAT QUEEN STREET CHAPEL, SEPTEMBER 20, 1835.

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" Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."—LUKE, xv. 10.

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IT has sometimes been questioned, and in some instances the question has been urged with feelings of very peculiar interest, whether the inhabitants of the invisible world are ever visitants of our earth, and whether they have any acquaintance with the affairs of men. By some we know it has been assumed and taken for granted, that no such intercourse and acquaintance can possibly exist: and in certain circles, we are aware, it has been deemed an indication of a superior intellect, and of a mind elevated above the influence of low and vulgar prejudices, to treat the subject with contempt and ridicule, as a childish imagination, or as a superstitious dream. One thing, however, is certain—ridicule never can be the test of truth. Hazardous, indeed, is the perseverance of him, who persists in pronouncing that to be impossible which the Word of God declares to be fact.

To the holy Scriptures, those lively, those infallible oracles—*infallible because divinely inspired*—we must, of course, be indebted for what we have of certainty on a subject of this nature: and from the discoveries of this volume it is most clear that angels, both bad and good, have an intimate acquaintance with the moral history of man. Bad angels, as our foes, are diligently seeking our destruction: good angels, as our friends, take a lively interest in our salvation. The latter remark seems to be implied in the passage I have read to you. How can angels rejoice in the event of the repentance of the sinner, unless they are acquainted with such repentance? How can angels rejoice when such an event takes place, unless that event be agreeable to their wishes and inclinations? A man cannot, and an angel cannot, rejoice in that which opposes his inclinations and his wishes: but angels *do* rejoice "over one sinner that repenteth."

Thus it would seem that angels are acquainted with what happens on earth, and angels are glad when the sinner is converted; such conversion giving a new impulse to their joy: so that our happiness heightens theirs. I know it may be urged, that the angels may receive information of such an event as this from Him who sees all things and knows all things. That they *may* receive such information by immediate revelation from that God, whose they are and whom they adore, is readily admitted: but it is abundantly obvious from what this sacred volume asserts, that they *have* the opportunity of ac-

quiring the knowledge of such a fact by their own actual observation. I ask you, Were not good angels familiar with the first created beings in Paradise? I ask you, Did not angels continually minister to men under the patriarchal and the Mosaic dispensations? I ask you, Is not the history of the Jewish people for centuries, a history also of the ministration of angels? I ask you, Were not the angels especially employed at the delivery of the law; and is it not for that reason called, "the word spoken by angels?" I ask again, Did not the Psalmist declare, and here stands the record, "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them?" And I inquire again, Are not we who are under this last, and best, and crowning dispensation of the truth and grace of God—are not we come, by the Gospel, by the Christian institution, more intimately and specially come, to "an innumerable company of angels?" And was not the incarnate God "seen of angels," as well as "preached unto the Gentiles?" And were not the first apostles of our Lord, in their labours and their toils, in their sufferings and in their triumphs, made "a spectacle to angels," as well as to men? I ask, finally, "Are not they all"—not a few of them; not some particular orders of them merely, but *all* of them, hierarchies and powers, cherubim and seraphim, Michael and Gabriel, all included—"Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" Do you wonder, then, that our poet of Paradise, who was certainly indebted to the Sacred Volume for many hints and suggestions in his admirable poem—do you wonder that he asserts, that

" Millions of spiritual creatures walk the earth  
Unseen, both when we wake, and when we sleep."

Whenever a sinner repents and is truly converted, that is a fresh accession to the joy of angels.

There are especially three events on record as occasions of angelic joy. The first was, *when God created this solar system*; when "He spake and it was done: he commanded and it stood fast;" and when this *earth* especially sprang into existence, in all its pristine beauty and glory, as the then future residence of man. On that occasion all these "morning stars" sung together and all "the first-born sons of God" shouted for joy.

The second event recorded in this book as the occasion of angelic joy, was *the incarnation of the world's Redeemer*. He had long been promised; he had long been expected. Angels had looked into these things; angels had been diligent students in the prophetic Scriptures; and they had been diligent observers of the sacred hieroglyphics under the Mosaic dispensation: and when all these things ripened into the actual event, and the Christ of God was born, one of these pure and lofty intelligences received a commission to announce the event to the honest shepherds; and he did this as "good tidings of great joy," not only to heaven, but "to all people;" and having done this he was suddenly joined by a multitude of the heavenly host; and they praised God, and rejoiced with exceeding joy, and made the concave of the skies vocal with their expressions of joy; and they said, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

The third occasion of angelic joy as left on record here, is that which my text describes, when *the end, even in an individual instance, for which the great Redeemer came to the world is being realized*—the end for which he

stooped to our world ; the end for which he lived in our world ; the end for which he bled on the cross ; the end for which he maketh intercession on the right hand of the Majesty on High. When a sinner repenteth, when a sinner is converted, and when a sinner is saved, then these angels that rejoiced at the creation of our world, that rejoiced at the incarnation of the world's Redeemer, rejoice again : and "I say unto you," says the great Teacher, "whatever men may say"—and he knows what is in angels as well as what is in men, and what takes place in heaven as well as what takes place on earth—"I say," says the great Teacher, "there is joy :" Yes, there is ! "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

The occasion of the text was the following. Many of the publicans and sinners—those who are deemed the worst, and the most abandoned and profligate of characters—drew near to listen to the gracious words that proceeded out of the mouth of the condescending and divine Teacher, who spake as never man spake. At this the scribes and pharisees, full of self-importance and self-sufficiency, murmured, filled with all envy and jealousy ; and they said, "This man—this man who professes to be our Redeemer and King—this man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." Christ never received sinners to connive at their sin : he only associated with sinners as a physician associates with the diseased, in order to restore them to health and soundness : the Saviour, in the context, is recorded to have associated with these sinners in order to encourage their repentance. The Lord, to rebuke those self-righteous pharisees, and to shew them that the feelings of envy and jealousy which they were fostering in their bosoms were just the reverse of those which good angels indulged, and that therefore their feelings must be wrong—for the feelings of angels are right, and the affections of good angels never take a wrong turn—therefore said he, "I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

Mark we, then, the event here described, and the joy, the angelic joy, which this occasions.

What have we then in THE EVENT ? A very serious event, a very interesting event, a very momentous event—the "*repentance*" of the sinner ; the conversion of the sinner ; for the word here obviously is to be understood in a comprehensive sense, as importing a real change, a spiritual, gracious, saving change. And especially—for the sense of the term must be fixed by its context—such is the interpretation of the term which the context requires. Read more particularly the parable of the Prodigal Son, and you will be convinced of this. Would that this event were more frequent ! O that it may occur, and in more instances than one or two, in this place this night !

"One sinner." And who is the sinner ? What is sin ? "Sin is the transgression of the law." The sinner, then, is the transgressor. And far, alas, we need not travel in order to find the sinner : from without these walls we need not go in order to find sinners. Ah, my fellow-creatures, we are all fellow-sinners ! For whatever diversity, circumstantial diversity, may mark the human being, as he is found existing under different colours and different climes and atmospheres, and as giving expression to his thoughts and feelings in different languages, there is, amidst all this circumstantial diversity, one point of resemblance, to which there is no exception whatever ; in which there

is no difference between the Jew and the Greek, for “*all* have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” There where you find a human being you find a sinner. This is the just but humbling designation of man; not of this man or that man merely, but of the species. And if all have sinned, then all are guilty: then all are under obligation to punishment: such is the condition of man.

But is this transgressing, sinful, guilty man abandoned to this state? Is he left to perish in his transgressions, in his guilt, in his depravity, without help and without hope? God forbid! Behold “we bring you good tidings of great joy.” God, who is rich in mercy, for the great love wherewith he hath loved us, beheld us when there was no other eye to pity, and no other hand to save: he remembered us—ah, when he might have forgot!—“he remembered us in our low estate, because his mercy endureth for ever:” and the innate and intense and overflowing mercy and compassion of God, prompted him in his wisdom, his unfathomable wisdom, to devise a redeeming, restoring plan; and “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son;” he spared him not; he delivered him up for us all; and “this is a faithful saying,” and we know it is a faithful saying—“and it is worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” To save sinners he lived; to save sinners he died; to save sinners he rose from the dead; to save sinners he took human nature up to the throne; to save sinners he ever liveth to make intercession for us; to save sinners he sent forth the word of his truth; to save sinners he sent down the spirit of his grace; to save sinners he appointed the ministry of the Word—the word of mercy, the word of grace, the word of pardon, peace, and salvation. Pardon and salvation are promised to all them that repent and believe the Gospel. Hence our divine Saviour, and his immediate disciples, commenced their personal ministry with this doctrine of the Gospel: they said, “The time is fulfilled, the kingdom of heaven is at hand; therefore repent ye, and believe the Gospel.” And those who were commissioned by Jesus Christ, as the heralds of his truth and mercy, went forth and preached—and what did they preach? The evangelist tells you; they preached that men should “repent, and do works meet for repentance.” To this hour, wherever an evangelical ministry is exercised, one leading object of that ministry is, to call sinners to repentance.

“One sinner that repenteth:” what meaneth this? Repentance means *conviction*. The repentant sinner is a convinced sinner. Convinced of what? Convinced and convicted of his folly and his guilt: that is the conviction. Now there are multitudes of sinners who have no conviction of the evil of sin: they are even desiring sin, and taking pleasure and delight in sin, and drinking in iniquity as the ox drinketh water; as though that could give them pleasure and enjoyment. They see not the odious nature of sin; they perceive not its awful demerit. The enlightened mind of the awakened, repentant sinner is far otherwise. He sees the evil of sin: he sees it to be exceeding sinful. He not only sees its odious nature and character, but he feels its deformity, and he feels the pungent smart of actual conviction, when the two-edged sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, pierces his very soul, and cutteth with both its edges there. He goes to the law, and the law of God thunders its peals in his ears, and flashes its lightning in his face, and cries out, “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to

do them." Conscience pours forth its thunders within; conscience says, as Nathan said to David, " Thou art the man—the guilty man, the condemned man, the sinner on the verge of ruin, hanging over the pit of horror and destruction." Clearly does the convicted and awakened sinner see the folly of all those notions to which he formerly adhered with such tenacity, about the goodness of his heart, the innocence of his life, the security of his religious state, that they were all the while the imaginations of a moral delirium. Come to his senses, come to himself, and awake to his awful, imminent danger, he breathes out the penitent publican's prayer, " God be merciful to me a sinner."

The repentance of the sinner—what means it? It means *contrition*. Contrition for what? Contrition for sin, as sin against an infinitely great and holy God. Now it is very true man is the child of sorrow; and it is true that he is " born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward." It is very true that the world in which we live is a weeping world; that the vale along which human beings are travelling is a vale of tears; and that every heart knows its own bitterness: and sometimes you have been in circumstances, and by possibility you may be in them again,

" When sighs and tears might sooner fail,  
Than cause to sigh and weep."

Ah, but this is not the contrition that always connects itself with genuine repentance! An inspired writer of the New Testament has taught us to distinguish between the sorrow of the world and godly sorrow: " The sorrow of the world worketh death," says the Apostle: there is no utility there. But there is a sorrow that is of a godly sort, a gracious sort, a religious sort; that " worketh repentance unto salvation, never needing to be repented of." Behold the repentant sinner: he looks at that authority which he has insulted; he looks at that law, so pure, so holy, so good, which he has violated; he thinks of that mercy which he has abused; he thinks of that guilt which he has contracted; of that imminent peril to which as a sinner he has exposed himself: and he abhors himself, and repents in dust and ashes. He betakes himself to the throne of the heavenly grace, and with cries, and tears, and supplications, he pleads with God for mercy and salvation. And there are moments when he thinks that he could weep his very life away, for having sinned against a Being so holy, so great, and so good.

The repentance of the sinner—what means it? It means *the abandonment of sin*. Come to himself, in vain does the Prodigal, in the parable with which the text stands connected, reflect on his degraded and his lost condition: " How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger?" In vain does he form the resolution, " I will arise:" in vain does he make his confession: all this avails him nothing, unless this resolution and determination be carried into practical effect. He must " arise;" he must do more; he must " go to his father, and he must say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee." Tell me not of your convictions, tell me not of your contrition, tell me not of your confession, tell me not of your prayers, and your tears, and your sorrows; I say all this goes for nothing, all this is worth nothing, unless sin is abandoned. Hence that powerful preacher of repentance, John the Baptist, said to those who came to his ministry, " Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance." What think you are these " fruits meet for repentance?" Why convictions.

and reflections, and awakenings are but the *buds* of repentance ; prayers, tears, confessions, and supplications are but the promising *blossoms* of repentance, where then is the *fruit* ? O the “ fruit meet for repentance ” is found where the penitent sinner “ ceases to do evil, and learns to do well : ” there is the practical result, and there is the “ fruit meet for repentance : ” when the sinner puts off the sin that was dear to him as a right hand ; when he plucks out, and casts from him, the sin that was dear to him as a right eye ; when he loathes and abhors himself on account of sin, and flies from sin in all its forms and modifications.

Hence the definition of repentance in the catechism of the Church of England : a definition objected to by some ; a definition, however, which contains that without which all the rest is nothing : “ Repentance whereby ”—Ah, my friends, whereby a man thinks over again the past ? Repentance whereby a man is disturbed, and made to feel some emotion of sorrow because he has done something that occasions him some inconvenience, and he wishes it had not been so : is that repentance ? Whereby he breathes out a prayer that God would be merciful to him, and promises he will do so no more : is that all ? No ; but repentance is that “ whereby we forsake sin : ” and where sin is not forsaken the repentance is not genuine ; where sin is not forsaken it cannot be forgiven.

The repentance of the sinner—what means it ? Why in this connexion it must include, *an application to God in Christ for salvation*. For the Prodigal Son not only returned to his father’s house, made his confession, and sued for admission, but actually obtained a gracious reception : “ This my son was dead, and is alive again ; he was lost, and is found.” The strayed sheep also, in the connexion of the text, was not only sought, but found and brought home, and introduced into the fold, and the shepherd rejoiced, and his friends rejoiced with him. Thus this wandering sinner, thus this poor prodigal, must be reclaimed from his wanderings ; he must be restored to favour, and honour, and acceptance. And on what ground ? Not on the ground of his prayers, his tears, his reformation, as though there were any thing meritorious there : all the tears he can shed cannot wash out the slightest moral stain. His confessions of guilt do not render him less guilty in the sight of a just and holy God. O there can be no ground of forgiveness, there can be no solid ground, no infinitely meritorious ground, in any thing man has done or can do : no ; but provided by infinite mercy is the meritorious sacrificial death of Jesus ; that is the ground, my fellow sinners, and the only meritorious ground of pardon and acceptance with God. Ah, that is the ground the repentant sinner takes : he abandons all dependance on all he can do : he comes stripped of all, and places his hope where God himself has placed it—on Him who died and revived again, that his faith and hope might be on God, and with a humble, penitent heart he believes on the Lord Jesus Christ ; and, if I may so express myself, the hand of divine mercy dips its pen in the blood of atonement, and writes forgiveness on the penitent, believing heart. He that confesseth and forsaketh sin, shall find favour. “ Faithful is he that hath promised, who also will perform.”

Now where is this event, this penitence and conversion of the sinner, to be found ? Where is the man to be found ? Is he to be found in this crowded assembly ? Surely there are some cases of this sort ; some who are sighing

and praying, and repenting, and supplicating, and expecting mercy and salvation. Where is this repentant sinner to be found? In the mansions of the rich, in the cottages of the poor, in the crowded city, in the obscure village or hamlet? Thank God, he has been found in all these places, and he shall be found still more frequently in these places, when conversions become more general—and more general they must become, more general they will become, before a rebel world shall be subdued to the obedience of the Gospel.

**WHAT INTEREST DOES THIS EVENT EXCITE?** Why with beings of his own species, if told of the event, there is no interest. Some, if they will vouchsafe to listen at all, only listen as to a tale that is told; there is no interest to them. What interest does this event excite? Why some, when told that such an one is a repentant sinner, regard all that connects itself with such a case as indicating enthusiasm or fanaticism, and they treat the case with scorn and derision. What interest does this man excite? There are others who look upon him with pity, real pity, and they say, "He is carrying matters far beyond what he ought to do." They say, "The man's reason is disturbed; the man is beside himself." The fact is, he is just come to himself. Like the poor Prodigal, he was beside himself; he was in a state of moral delirium before; now he is come to a right mind. What interest does he excite? There are some who, like these scribes and pharisees, although professing religion, are filled with envy and jealousy on this occasion, and though this Prodigal is converted, yet they can scarcely give him the right hand of fellowship. Ah, poor creature, but if thou art overlooked on earth, thou art not by angels in heaven. Poor man, though thy case excites suspicion, and scorn, and derision among thy fellow-creatures, thou art admired by angelic beings O "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repented."

Perhaps three preliminary observations may not be out of place here. The first is this; when the text says, "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God:"—and another text in this chapter says, "there is joy in heaven"—*we are not to suppose there is joy no where else.* We are not to suppose there is no joy among men, because there is joy among angels. *The man himself* must rejoice; the man who has found his Lord, who has found the pearl of great price; the poor man that has been freed from the vassalage of sin; the poor man who has found peace and comfort to his soul—surely he must rejoice! Look at the man: God has turned his mourning into joy, his midnight into day, and he goes on his way rejoicing.

Surely all *good men* must rejoice with him; men of whatever religious denomination, if they are good men, truly evangelical good men, truly evangelical Christians, must rejoice when a sinner is converted. Surely *pious parents* must rejoice when their children are converted: great is their joy; "This my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." Ah, and surely *the ministers of the sanctuary* rejoice. What, is there any envy among them? Because that sinner was not converted under my ministry, but under the ministry of some brother minister, shall I be envious? God forbid. If Christ be preached, and sinners be converted, I will rejoice. But if there is some joy on earth, there is far more in heaven among angels.

**Secondly,** when it is said "there is joy in the presence of the angels,"—the

other text says, "there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth"—*we are not to suppose there is no joy in heaven but on such an occasion.* My dear friends, heaven is the place of joy. Heaven! why joy finds its genial clime, its native element there: pure joy, holy joy, rational joy, and therefore continued joy. "In the presence of God there is fulness of joy, and at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore." And the redeemed human spirit that enters heaven enters into joy; God is his all. But if there is always joy in heaven, what can this mean, "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth?" If there is always joy there, my friends, such language must amount to this; that the repentance of the sinner gives a new impulse to that joy; that on the repentance of the sinner, the river of joy that constantly flows fast by the throne of God, on such an occasion swells and rises higher, and overflows its banks. Surely this language must amount to this much, that the repentance and conversion of a sinner is an event of such importance to heaven, that it causes a spring-tide emotion of angelic joy.

Thirdly, when the text specifies angels as the subjects of this joy, *we are not from this to conclude that there are any of heaven's blessed inhabitants that do not participate in the joy.* True it is angels rejoice: but, think you, do not the spirits of just men made perfect rejoice? Are not they equal to the angels of God? Are not they the friends and companions of saints and angels, and are not their sentiments, and views, and feelings congenial with these angels? The very things that can give joy to the angels must give joy to the pure human spirits that are mingling with these heavenly beings before the throne.

We can suppose a case. We can suppose a pious father and a pious mother, and yet they had a prodigal son; and notwithstanding the prayers of the father, and the tears of the mother, and notwithstanding the example of both, consistent and uniform, and the good instruction given, and the parental authority exercised, still on every occasion the prodigal son started aside: then again the parents had some hope, and they were drying up their tears; and again their son became a worse prodigal than before: and they prayed, and they hoped, and they exhorted, and they entreated, and they wept. But the mother died, and the father died, and they ascended to the paradise of God; and they left the prodigal son behind. Now think you, my fellow Christians, that all their prayers were lost, because they were not answered while the father and the mother lived? O not one of them was forgotten! These prayers were filed in the court above; and He that heard them, and He that filed them there, can answer them, and many a time he has answered them, after he has taken those to heaven that presented them when they were inhabitants of earth. Yes, and at last, perhaps, the death of the parent became the occasion of serious thought and reflection to this prodigal son. "My father is gone to heaven, my mother is gone to heaven, and what, then, am I to be lost for ever? Lost I must be if they are right; if the road they took is right, I am going in a contrary road, in company with others, to eternity, unless I turn, unless I pursue a different course." And he smites on his breast, and he relents, and he calls himself fool and madman for all that he has done. And then he begins to pray; and to remember the admonitions of his father, and the tears and prayers of his mother; and he returns to the Lord, and he seeks and finds mercy. What, think you, is the news of this received in heaven, is this good

news circulated there among angels, among the pure spirits of the just made perfect, and do the sainted spirits of the father and mother of this prodigal hear proclaimed the good news? How, then, must it thrill through their pure intellects before the throne, and how must they say, with rapturous joy, "Our prodigal son is converted at last."

And *the man Jesus*, although a man of sorrows, and in his incarnate state "acquainted"—yea he was "*acquainted!*" (what a word is that!) intimately acquainted, constantly acquainted "with grief." He often wept: he wept over Jerusalem, over impenitent sinners; and he wept when his friends, and those he loved, were in sorrow; he mingled his tears with theirs;—yet there was an occasion when even *the Man of sorrows* rejoiced in spirit, with a holy spiritual joy: it was on an occasion in exact accordance with that which my text describes—when the Shepherd is represented as rejoicing, because the strayed sheep returns, and is brought back to the fold. Ah, Jesus sees in the conversion of sinners "of the travail of his soul, and he is satisfied." This was the amount of joy that was set before him, when he "endured the cross despising the shame."

And although *the great God* is an infinite being, and because an infinite being his joy is, strictly speaking, incapable of accession or diminution, still the event my text describes must be well pleasing in his sight. Therefore the context represents *the Father* as rejoicing in the recovery and restoration of his long lost son.

*Angels*, however, are specified. Now that angels do rejoice needs no argument of mine to prove. The truth of the text is in the text itself; the truth of the text is proved by Him that asserts it. On the admission that this is a divine book, and that these are the words of Jesus Christ, the words of Him who came down from heaven to bear testimony to the truth, it follows on the truth of the Bible, that the fact is so: "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God." Well, how astonishing that such an event as this should be the occasion of angelic joy! Why, if it had been asserted, that these angels rejoice in ranging the cloudless fields of blissful vision in that world of light, and glory, and felicity in which they dwell, the vision of majesty, and beauty, and splendour of those heavens—had it been said that these angels rejoice in the contemplation of the glory of their Creator's works, even in this lower province of his vast empire, the magnitude, the harmony, the grandeur, the glory of his works—the stars of heaven pursuing their course, revolving in their respective orbits with order, and beauty, and diligence, the moon walking in her brightness, the orb of day dispelling the darkness of the night, gilding the mountains with his golden rays, throwing his genial beams across the smiling landscape, and diffusing light, and warmth, and comfort over the face of nature—it would not be much. Had it been said that these lofty intelligences rejoice in the spread of human genius, in the discoveries and improvements, in the arts and sciences, and literature, it had not been surprising that these pure intelligences rejoiced on such occasions. But what do they? They turn away, turn away their eyes from the beauty and splendour of the heavens, while they admire; they turn away their eyes from the sun and moon, and all the magnificence and beauty of created nature. What saith the text: They turn away from the great ones of this earth, and all they have discovered, and all they have done that has occasioned so much admiration among many of their fellow-

creatures. What saith it? Why these lofty beings overlook all these things, and fix their attention on some poor, contrite, repentant sinner: and they mark with interest and delight the progress of that sinner in his conversion, the steps by which the wanderer returns to his Lord.

Ah, my fellow sinners, angels see these things through the proper medium; not through the false and deceptive medium through which the men of this world look at such an event as this—they see it in the light of truth; they see it in the light of eternity; they see, in the conversion of the sinner, the incipient development of that plan of wisdom divine, compared with which all this world's science is but a splendid folly to the conversion of the sinner. These good angels behold in the moral scene a far lovelier creation arise, than when the universe was made. O yes, the tears that drop from the eyes of the repentant sinner, are more lovely in the eyes of good angels, than all the gems that sparkle in the rays of the sun from the womb of the morning. What do they see, what do they hear? Why the very sighs of the broken and contrite heart are more melodious in the ears of angels than all the music of the spheres.

Surprising, however, as this event is, there are principles on which we may account for it. Perhaps we may resolve them all into these two. We may account for the fact, that angels rejoice when the sinner is converted, first, on the principle of their piety to God; secondly, on the great principle of their benevolence to man.

On the principle of *their piety to God*. Wherever there is piety there is love to God: wherever there is piety there is supreme love to God. What think you, my dear friends, does that man love his God and Saviour at all, who does not love him above all? And in proportion to our love to God must be our hatred of any thing that God hates. God hates sin; then the pious man hates sin, and is grieved when sin is committed, and God is dishonoured: and therefore he says, “Rivers of water run down mine eyes, because men keep not thy law.” On the other hand the man that loves God must love and delight in whatever tends to bring glory to God. When man is converted to God, sin is abandoned, sin is confessed; pardon is sought and obtained; and the man now gives all his heart and life to God; and every pious man, because he loves his God, must delight in such an event as this.

But the piety of angels is, on several accounts, superior to ours. Their piety, for instance, is more enlightened than ours. Angels and pure intelligences have an unclouded existence, and are not impeded by a tenement of clay. Angels, again, are our elder brethren: we do not know how much older they are than human beings; we do not know how long they had in heaven an innate existence before men had existence at all. We cannot tell how long they have been adding to their stores of knowledge, pious knowledge, knowledge of God, knowledge of his purposes and his ways. Then the angels again have privileges we have not. In some respects it is theirs to drink in knowledge from its pure and immediate source: it is theirs to climb the tree of knowledge, and see without interposition, without danger, and with success. Again, we know not of what a sweep of observation the intellect of the angels may be capable, even in a moment; how much knowledge they may acquire in a moment. And then all this knowledge *sanctified*; all this knowledge pious; all this knowledge of God increasing their ardour and love to him. Their piety is

more pure than ours: for "the best of men are but men at the best." Now these good angels are immaculate: the nature of these good angels was never yet tarnished: they have kept their first estate. Holiness is their element; and nothing can be lovely in the eyes of good angels unless it is holy. Then, again, their piety is more fervent always; they burn with intense ardour, and love, and devotion. Why are these angels called seraphs? What means that word? "Burning ones;" an expression peculiarly significant of the intense flame of love which constantly glows in their lofty bosoms to that God whose they are and whom they serve.

Still, if such be their piety, so lofty, so enlightened, so immaculate, so buoyant, what must be their views of sin? If it is said of the great and holy God that he is "of purer eyes than to behold evil," may it not be said in a subordinate sense of the pious and holy angels? If angels are so pious, then in what light must they view sin? Every act of sin is an act of treason against that divine Sovereign whom they with perfect loyalty obey. If such their piety, then in what light must they view Satan? Why as the foe of God and man. When they see the sinner converted, what do they see then? They see the common enemy disappointed and defeated, they see the ranks of the rebels forsaken; they see the lost subject recovered and reduced to allegiance, and subjected to his proper Sovereign.

Again, if such their piety, with what delight must they view every thing that tends to illustrate the eternal purposes and perfections of that God whom they supremely love and adore? In the conversion of the sinner they must see the practical development of that wonderful scheme of divine wisdom, into which they have long been looking—the manifold wisdom of God: and always in the conversion of the sinner, unto principalities and powers in heavenly places is his wisdom made manifest. And these beings rejoice in the conversion of sinners, because they see the working, if I may so express myself, of the redeeming plan; the plan foretold by the prophets; the plan typified by the system of the Mosaic institute. And that plan was long studied by the angels: O they now see some of the rays of that glory which was to follow the sufferings of Christ. These were the things which the angels had long desired to look into, and now that they are realized, and now that they are exemplified, they rejoice. Now they rejoice, and must rejoice, because they see—this is the idea—they see the lost property of the God they love reclaimed: yes, and reclaimed after its condition had been all but hopeless and desperate; reclaimed after the difficulties that stood in the way; and soon to be inseparably reclaimed, in a way which declares the value of the property thus reclaimed.

For by what expense, by what a price, has it been redeemed and recovered: and recovered in a way which is consistent with the authority of law and the order of government: and reclaimed in a way which is consistent with all the holy and high attributes of justice, holiness, and truth; and in a way that gives new lustre to all the moral attributes of Deity; and that will eternally bring glory to that God whom they supremely love and adore! Ah, and such an event gives the richest emotion to their feelings, exciting the highest delight and transport in their bosoms. What do they? They seize their well-tuned harps, and swell their loudest notes, and all heaven is vocal on the joy-inspiring theme.

We account for this also on the principle of *their benevolence to man*. Where

there is love to God, there must be benevolence to man; the one follows the other as a consequence; as effect follows cause: for he who loves God must love his brother also. And benevolence is not a mere negative virtue: it is not benevolence, if there be merely *no ill-will*; no; but it is benevolence when there is good-will, and good-will to all, and ill-will to none; that is benevolence. And, my friends, there are those of our own species who are so far influenced and elevated by the truth and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, in them and with them, as to live under the habitual dominion of this heaven-born angelic principle of benevolence. There are those of our fellow-beings who have no greater joy than the doing good; no greater joy than to visit the afflicted, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and instruct the ignorant; no greater joy than to diffuse light and blessings on every side. There are such beings, who not only "rejoice with them that do rejoice," but "weep with them that weep," and are ready to fly on errands of mercy and of benevolence, to the abodes of disease, and poverty, and wretchedness, and there pour in the balm of the richest consolation into the disconsolate and sorrowful bosom. Why, we cannot but admire them: we cannot but approve whenever we see such of our race who are living for such purposes and are influenced by such principles.

But then, my dear friends, the benevolence of angels must be superior to ours; we are encompassed with infirmities while in this world: but O the angels have a benevolence which is beyond any thing that human language can possibly express. What must be their benevolence who are the angels of Him who is infinite in benevolence? They are the angels of the God of love, and it is theirs to behold the face of the God of love, and to reflect his own image back again upon himself. They must be benevolent, because they are good: benevolence is the essential property of goodness; and the more benevolence the more goodness. The more the angels see God, and there is no mixture of evil in them, the more their benevolence must be unmixed. These good angels must be benevolent because they are happy. Benevolence is essential to happiness: where there is envy there is misery: the envious man is a miserable man; but where happiness lives envy dies, "and love overflows to all;" and love overflowing makes an angel rejoice. Think you, my friends, that that low mean thing, which we call envy, has any existence in the lofty and pure bosom of an angel? It dwells not there. And it is a disgrace to human beings that it should ever be found in their bosoms.

If these angels are filled with the feeling of benevolence and good-will to man; if they have such a good-will to man, and take such a lively interest in man's happiness, that his happiness heightens their's, what must be their apprehensions of his danger while he goes on in his sin? In the wide range of their observation, they see the load of guilt he has contracted; they see the sword of justice that hangs over him; they see the curse of the law that pursues him; they see the pit move from beneath to meet him at his coming; and O what must be their apprehensions!

O but when they see this sinner returning to God through Christ, when this sinner is converted, and becomes a new man, how great must be their joy! What see they then? Then they see the man that was condemned to die, obtaining free forgiveness and royal clemency, and he lives! What see they then? They see the man that was diseased, restored to health; and they rejoice What see they then? They see the poor famishing prodigal gone up to his

Father's house, and sitting at his Father's table, where there is bread enough and to spare ; and they rejoice ! What see they then ? They see a brand plucked from the burning ; a smoking brand from the very verge of the pit, quenched in the Redeemer's blood ; and they rejoice ! What see they then ? They see the man that was dark and blind, enlightened with the light of religion ; and they rejoice ! What see they then ? They see the man that was a child of the devil and an heir of hell, become a child of God and an heir of the hope of eternal life ! What see they then ? They see the prodigal admitted to favour and honour ; he has shoes on his feet, and he has a ring on his finger, and the best robe is put on him, and they rejoice ! What see they then ? They see him that is thus born again adopted into the family of heaven, destined to be their future companion and friend, born from above, born to that world and for that world of love ; and they look forward to that period when they hope to be able to greet him as their own companion and friend, for ever and ever ! And the angel that witnesses the event, speaking after the manner of men, stretches his golden wings, bends his way to the mansions of the blessed, and circulates the news, and speeds through the ranks of angels to join the shining hierarchies, and then they seize their harps, and heaven is vocal, heaven rings vocal with jubilee. However it may be on earth, depend upon it there is no elder brother that refuses to come in : Michael does not, Gabriel does not refuse ; they all come in : they are all in harmony, and all in concord, and all in raptures, and

“ All heaven resounds,  
The dead's alive, the lost is found.”

If then there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, I infer, in the first place, that so far as angels are capable of the opposite emotions, there must be sorrow, there must be sighs, there must be tears among angels, speaking after the manner of men, when sinners remain impenitent. Ah, my fellow sinner, dost thou smile at all this ? Poor wretch ! thy guardian angel weeps. And art thou still disposed and determined to go on in sin ? Art thou still determined to seek death, rather than life ; still determined to add iniquity to transgression, and sin to sin ? Remember, that “ sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.” And is thy conduct marked by angels ? Is your's marked, is mine marked by angels present, who are invisible to us ? Must our conduct be reported to-night in both worlds ? Are bad angels about to carry the news down to the pit, to circulate it there, or good witnessing angels about to carry the news to heaven ? What is it to be ? Must there be sighs among angels, and must there be universal joy among devils, because of your impenitence ? Must angels weep ; and shall your impenitence, O sinner, raise the loud laugh of hell ? God forbid ! God forbid ! O that your repentance may occasion murmurs and sighs in perdition : O that your repentance may occasion joy and transport in heaven. But the hour is passing, and what is the fact ?

I remember a circumstance that was told me by an old minister now no more, now a sainted spirit before the throne, respecting the celebrated Whitfield. He was once preaching, I believe on this very text, and in his own characteristic manner was asking his hearers at the close of his sermon, in the application of it : “ Now what is to be done ? Is there to be no good news ? Has Gabriel already gone and abandoned you ; and is there no sinner in all this congregation

repenting—all obdurate, all callous, all tearless? No good news to go to heaven!" At that very moment a poor sinner was smitten to the heart; and Whitfield, seeing the tears run down his cheeks, cried out, in his own peculiar manner, "Stop Gabriel! stop Gabriel! there is good news to carry to heaven after all; here is a poor sinner beginning to weep." O that it may be so in many instances to-night!

Secondly, if there be joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth—and there is—what must be the joy when *many* sinners—not one, or two, or three, but when hundreds and thousands—repent at one time! What must have been the joy in heaven, when under one sermon of the apostle Peter's, three thousand souls were converted! What a jubilee must that have been in heaven! What will it be my friends, when the Word of the Lord triumphs over all opposition! What will it be when more agents and instruments are employed; when sinners all over the world shall be instructed, and become repentant and converted sinners! What will it be when *all* shall know the Lord, and every knee bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father! O I wonder not that the holy prophets were entranced when they looked onward through the long vista of the future, and beheld all those lovely paradisaical scenes, when all should know the Lord, and when this dark world should be enlightened with the beams of the Sun of Righteousness. I wonder not at the bold figure, proceeding from the vivid imagination of the poet, that represents all nature as alive, all nature as sympathizing in the general joy; that represents the hills as vocal, and the rocks and streams as pouring forth their pious notes, and all the trees of the field as clapping their hands. Yes, yes,

"The dwellers in the vale, and 'mong the rocks,  
Shout to each other; and the mountain tops,  
From distant mountains, catch the falling joy;  
'Till nation after nation taught the strain,  
Earth rolls the rapturous hosannah round."

And earth and heaven, and men and angels, and (with reverence be it spoken) the Saviour of the world—the Saviour, the angels, and men—participate in the general joy.

Thirdly; if there be joy among the angels on the conversion of a sinner, then I infer greater still must be the joy when that sinner is finally saved. Conversion, my friends, is but our entrance on the path of life: we have to travel the road; the journey lies before us. We have to strive against sin; we have to resist the devil, and crucify the flesh, and overcome the world. The Christian soldier has enlisted; he has taken the King's bounty, and he has put on the King's livery, and taken to him the whole armour of God; and the battle is before him, and the battle is to be fought, and the battle is to be won: he has not yet won the prize. He has commenced a voyage towards the port of life: but there are seas before him, and it will not always be calm: there may be tumultuous seas, and many a storm he may have to encounter. I sometimes think, who can tell how these pure and benevolent spirits are caring for us when we are not caring for ourselves. Perhaps, when we are looking another way, they see the snare laid for us, and they are afraid lest we should be entangled: they see the temptation, and it is true, they see something like incit-

nation on our part; and when they see the balance trembling on its axis, who can tell how these good beings are alarmed lest we should dishonour the God whom they love; lest we should bring guilt on our consciences? But when the journey is accomplished, and the pilgrim arrives safe at home, when the battle is fought and the victory given; when the race is run, and the palm is borne off triumphant; when the voyage of life is over, when after weathering up on the broad stream we at last, with a full sail, and a spring tide, and fair wind, enter the port, how will these angels rejoice! "Welcome, welcome; the storm weathered, and arrived safe in port!" Or, to speak without a figure, when the redeemed human spirit is just about to escape away from the poor dying world, what think you, do not angels wait round the post of honour and of joy? How happened it with good Lazarus? Why, when the heavy hand of adversity, poverty, and disease, laid upon his lacerated body, crushed his happy soul out of that body, it was to the embraces of angels: he was carried by angels to Abraham's bosom. And will these benevolent beings wait around your dying bed, and when your happy spirit takes its flight, will they be your convoy? Yes, they will, and conduct your pious spirit up to the Father's courts of light. And on their arrival there, will they not say, in a secondary and subordinate sense, as was said of the great Redeemer in the first place, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up ye everlasting doors, that this heir of glory may come in?"—not "the king of glory," no; but some seraph, bending down from the battlements of heaven asks, "Who is this heir of glory; whence comes he?" "O he was a repertant sinner; under such and such a sermon he sought and found mercy through Jesus; he has honoured his profession, lived and died in the faith of Jesus, and he is an heir of glory. Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up ye everlasting doors, that this heir of glory may enter." And what then will be the joy!

Lastly, if the conversion of sinners be an event of such magnitude, interest, and importance as to occasion angelic joy, then I infer that all possible endeavours, and suitable means, ought to be put into operation with the view of increasing the number of conversions. What ought there not to be sent forth; what agencies, what means, in order that the myriads of lost wandering sheep may be sought and found? Then let sinners be called to repent by the mercy of God, by the tears and the prayers, the accumulated sufferings, by the agony and the bloody sweat, by the cross and passion, the death and burial, of our blessed Redeemer; and by his glorious resurrection and ascension, and by the coming of the Holy Ghost. Let them be called to repentance by the fear of hell and the hope of heaven, by the value of the soul and the importance of eternity. Let them be called to repentance by the church on earth, ready to give them the right hand of fellowship, and by the spirits of the just before the throne ready to hail them as fellow heirs. And let them be called to repentance by angels waiting, ready to tune their harps afresh, and ready to rejoice and sing over their conversion.

Well, now my friends, why was this chapel erected, but that the message of mercy might be published, and sinners converted, and souls saved, and Christ magnified? Why was so large a sum expended, but because those who expended it had a conviction of the value of the soul, and that one soul is worth all the silver and gold in the universe? Ah, my friends, we have been talking about angels to-night. It just now occurs to me that God designs to honour

you in a way he never honoured an angel ; even Gabriel the archangel. Angels take a lively interest, angels look on, angels love, angels admire ; but then angels are not instruments : no, no, Gabriel and Michael, the highest cherubim and seraphim, silver and gold have none. But, thank God, silver and gold have you ; you have what angels have not ; and God designs to honour you in a way angels are not. Envy you they cannot ; but they admire, and they will give glory to God, when they see your liberality and your zeal on an occasion like this.

REV. W. JAY,

LRYLE CHAPEL, BATH, SEPTEMBER 29, 1

I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God."—*Acts*,

My brethren, I need not say that we live in a parting world. Death is always invading us, and producing separation among neighbours, and friends, and relations. Alas! who has not tasted the bitterness of this cup? They who have lived for a considerable time in our world have been often called to drink it; yea, and others not so far advanced in life have had reason frequently to exclaim, "Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness."

There are not only partings by death, but in life. These are commonly deemed *temporary*, and we expect to meet again after the lapse of some weeks, or months, or years, and to intermingle our feelings and our communications. Yet *any* of these separations may be final, considering the frailty of the body, and the numberless diseases and accidents to which we are constantly exposed. Whenever we shake hands, it may be the last shake; whenever we salute, it may be the last salutation. Sometimes from the distance to which we go, or the length of the intended absence, we may reckon upon the parting as *likely* to be final. This was the case *here* with Paul and his connexions. "When he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all. And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him; sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more." Previous to this, his interview with them was the most solemn and affectingly interesting In his way from Macedonia to Jerusalem he came to Miletus, and he wished to go to Ephesus, but was not allowed. He therefore called the elders of the church from thence; and when they were come he said unto them, "Ye know that from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations which befell me, by the lying in wait of the Jews; and how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying, That bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of

the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." Happy is the minister who can make this appeal his own, and after leisure, and after reflection, and after comparison of his preaching with the infallible standard of truth, can say in humble confidence, "I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God."

Observe, first, the subject of his attention—"the counsel of God :" secondly, the manner in which he announced it ; he shunned not to declare it : thirdly, his satisfactory consciousness of it ; "For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God."

First, THE SUBJECT OF HIS ATTENTION—"the counsel of God." Counsel now signifies advice, direction, deliberation : but when the Bible was translated it more commonly signified scheme, purpose, design. Hence you read, "His counsels of old are faithfulness and truth :" "My counsel shall stand, I will do all my pleasure :" "The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever :" "He worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." Hence you read in the liturgy of the Church, that from God "all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works proceed." "Good counsels" there mean just aims and designs : they are distinguished from "holy desires" going before, and "just works" following after. *Here* the word intends the scheme, the purpose, the design of God with regard to the salvation of his people ; and it is so called, not because God deliberates or consults, (for, as Isaiah says, "With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding ?") but to shew us that he abounds herein towards us with all wisdom and prudence.

My dear hearers, to bring sin into the world was an easy thing : to take it away was a work to which God, the only God, was equal. We have imperfect views of the evil of sin, and also of the holiness and justice of God ; and therefore we are not sufficiently struck with the difficulties that stood in the way of our salvation : but God knows them perfectly, and his scheme for removing them all and restoring us to himself is contained in the Gospel. This is what the Apostle means by "the counsel of God :" and this was the Apostle's subject of attention in all his preaching ; not human science, though he was a man of genius and education himself, brought up at the feet of Gamaliel : not the politics of this world ; he left human governments where he found them ; he knew that reason was available for all these, and that the *Christian* did not abolish the *man* and the *citizen* : not the petty interests of mortality ; he looked "not at the things which were seen, but the things which are not seen," knowing that "the things which are seen are temporal, but that the things which are not seen are eternal." He was "the servant of the Most High God, to shew unto men"—what? "the way of salvation," even Jesus, therefore, who is "the way, the truth, and the life," (for "no man cometh to the Father but by him ;") to shew how a rebellious subject can be reconciled to his displeased and injured sovereign—how a wretched slave can be redeemed from the curse of the law and the bondage of corruption, and issue into the

glorious liberty of the sons of God—how the guilty can be justified freely from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses—how the unholy can be sanctified—how the weak can hold on their way, and wax stronger and stronger—how the opposed can be more than conquerors through Him that hath loved them—how the most miserable, and the mortal, and the dying can enter into life eternal—how the poor and the needy can obtain the unsearchable riches of Christ, and be blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in him—how (in a word) man, the sinner, can be raised above the angels who never sinned, and not only “have life,” but have it “more abundantly”—how sin can be pardoned, and yet condemned—how the law can suffer the sinner to escape, and yet be fulfilled, and magnified, and made honourable—how “mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace kiss each other”—how, while he “redeems Jacob,” he “glorifies himself in Israel”—and how “glory to God in the highest” can be blended with “peace on earth, and good-will to men.”

My brethren, however this may be despised by many of our fellow creatures, *this* is the grand thing; it is *this* that aggrandizes our comparatively little world. Why, do you imagine this earth was made and is sustained to be a warehouse for merchants, or a study for philosophers, or a laboratory for chymists, or a field of slaughter for murdering heroes, or a cabinet for the intrigues of wily statesmen? No, but for something infinitely above all these—that there may be a school to train up pupils for eternity—that there may be a soil to fix the cross on—that there may be an abode for three and thirty years for Incarnate Deity—that there may be a region in which is accomplished the work, and a theatre on which are displayed the wonders of redeeming love, compared with which the formation and the preservation of the world is nothing, and concerning which God says, “Behold I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former shall not be remembered, neither come into mind.” It was owing to this that the Redeemer “rejoiced in the habitable parts of the earth,” and that “his delights were with the sons of men;” and that when he was coming to assume our nature, and live and die amongst us, it was said, “Behold he cometh leaping upon the mountains, and skipping upon the hills,” and saying, “I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished.” Despised as it is by numbers of our fellow-creatures, the angels, we are told, desire to look into these things—the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow; and they come to the church to learn the manifold wisdom of God. However many of our fellow-creatures may disregard it, God the Judge of all has engaged to render it a universal diffusion. And for this purpose the dispensations of his providence are all at work; and “every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill made low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain; and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.” “I will overturn, overturn, overturn, until He shall come,” says he, “whose right it is, and I will give it him.” Then “the wilderness and the solitary place shall be made glad, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose.” Then “the Lord shall be King over all the earth.” “In that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one;” and “all shall know him from the least to the greatest.”

Secondly, observe THE MANNER IN WHICH HE ANNOUNCED IT: "I have not shunned," says he, "to declare unto you all the counsel of God."

Three things may here be remarked. For, first, it is clearly implied that there is in this subject *a fulness of affluence and richness*. Though it be a *whole*, yet it has *a thousand parts*: and the whole is a *mighty* whole too. According to the words from which we addressed you on the last Sabbath-day morning within these walls, where David says, "I have seen an end of all perfection, but thy commandment is exceeding broad." His "commandment" means his word; and therefore the intention of David is to intimate that all human excellency is exceedingly limited; but that there is a boundless extensiveness in the Scriptures of truth. As we have been singing,

" 'Tis a broad land of wealth unknown,  
Whence springs of life arise,  
Seeds of immortal bliss are sown,  
And hidden glories rise;

" The best relief that mourners have  
It makes our sorrows bless'd;  
Our fairest hope beyond the grave,  
And our eternal rest."

The Apostle therefore calls it "the unsearchable riches of Christ," which he was to preach among the Gentiles; and he prays for the Ephesians that they may be "filled with all the fulness of God."

Secondly, it is intimated that *this subject may be abridged, contracted, and partially concealed*. And this may be the case where it is not *expressly denied*, where it is not *entirely rejected*, and where the parts admitted and noticed are not *mangled*.

And thirdly, it equally implies this—that *it requires firmness and moral heroism to withstand and resist the temptations to this curtailment and separation*: for says the Apostle, "I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." The language surely implies that he had *some*, that he had *much* difficulty to overcome here for this purpose. The temptations in this case to induce a minister to shun, to omit some of the counsels of God are various. Sometimes there are temptations arising from *the preachers themselves*. They should be clean, for they are the vessels of the Lord. But supposing they are not, what then does their *arguing reprove*? Their *example* will paralyze all their endeavours. "Thou, therefore, which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? Thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? Thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?" They may *say*, and *do not*: they may even make the greatest noise sometimes when they are most defective. But a drunkard is not likely to declaim boldly against intemperance: a bad husband is not likely to enforce very zealously the admonition, "Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them;" "Husbands love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church." A man is not likely to enforce with pleasure where he condemns himself in the things which he allows. Quintillian therefore contended strongly that an orator must be a good man. This does not at first appear. Cannot a bad man have a good voice, and a good elocution, and a good arrange-

ment of his subject, as well as a good man? Yes, but *this* man alone is free from every improper bias: nothing keeps him from going straight forward in his subject: he can deliver all his mind; he has nothing to keep in, nothing to reconcile, nothing to explain; but can raise himself up to the impulse and impression of his subject. How much more is this required in the case of a preacher! They who apply to him should be able to say, subordinately, as the Pharisees did to our Saviour when they came to him, "We know that thou art true and speakest the way of God in truth; neither carest thou for any man, for thou regardest not the persons of men."

But there are other temptations to this curtailment and separation arising from the *hearers*. They often inspire the preacher with fear, fear of giving offence; and the "fear of man bringeth a snare." Where a man is very dependent on his hearers, he must possess much grace in order to go on and to be able to say, "I declare unto you all the counsel of God."

The temptations arising from hearers principally regard doctrine, experience, and practice. We can only refer to generalities; it is not to be supposed that I can particularize *every* case.

First, the man may shun to declare all the counsel of God on the side of *doctrine*, from a fear of the charge of *antinomianism*. This charge has always been brought against certain doctrines, and especially the doctrine of justification by faith and not by works. It was brought against the apostles themselves. Says Paul, "We be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say, Let us do evil, that good may come: whose damnation is just." "What, shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid," says he, "for how shall we who are dead to sin live any longer therein?" It was said with regard to Luther, that all his doctrine and preaching was this—"Believe only, and sin cheerfully." Never was there a viler misrepresentation: well understood it should rather be, "Believe only, and *obey* cheerfully." He contended, and so did the other reformers, that "faith without works is dead, being alone;" that the faith which is of the operation of God "works by love, purifies the heart, and overcomes the world."

Again: the preacher may fail to declare all the counsel of God on the side of *experience*, afraid of the charge of *enthusiasm*. It will be acknowledged that there are many false and many foolish things said about experience, and valued too upon the Blessed Spirit of God. But what of this? Every real Christian must be able to say with Newton, "I have learned by experience." "True religion," as Hart says, "is more than *notion*; something must be *known* and *felt*." Can there be love unfelt? Can there be sorrow unfelt? Religion must be *within* in the *principle*, before it can be *without* in the *conduct*. These things must be known and felt before they can be pursued. What says the Saviour? "The water that I shall give a man shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." And says God in the new covenant, "I will put my Spirit within them, and cause them to walk in my statutes, and to keep my judgments that they may do them."

Then another shuns to declare all the counsels of God on the side of *practice*, afraid of the charge of *legality*. There are these weak beings in every Christian congregation who are sure, if the preacher dwells upon the duty of good *works*, however evangelically, to be dissatisfied. "O," say they often, "put aside all such discussions and recommendations." "O," say they, (for we

know their language, we know their slang) “ O, the grace of God will teach people to do all this.” How was it then the apostles did not know this? If they had they would not have occupied so much of their epistles with entering into details, and enforcing all personal and relative engagements upon Christians. “ The grace of God will teach us to do all this.” Indeed it will not: the grace of God is not to *teach*—the grace of God is to *capacitate* and to *enable* us. The *Word* teaches: all our religion is in *this Book*, or no where; and the Spirit of God is only to *lead* us into all this truth. It is the Gospel the Apostle means when he says, “ The *grace* of God which bringeth salvation, and which hath appeared unto all men, teacheth us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in the present world.” Says the Apostle to Timothy, “ These things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they who have believed in God be careful to maintain good works.” Our dear Saviour said, “ If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye *do* them.” And when the woman exclaimed, “ Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked;” “ Yea rather,” said he, “ blessed are they that hear the word of God, and *do* it.” And so in the conclusion of his sermon on the Mount: “ Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:” (which comprehends the larger portion of every congregation under heaven at present), “ and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.”

Now when a man can boldly put all these things together—this doctrine, this experience, and this practice; when, regardless of the charge of antinomianism, he can bring forward clearly and fully the doctrines of the Gospel; when, regardless of the charge of enthusiasm, he can bring forward Christian experience, and dwell upon the agency and influence of the Spirit of God in the soul of man; and when, regardless of the charge of legality, he can enforce every pious temper and instance of holy conduct; this man may say, “ I have not shunned to declare all the counsel of God.”

But before I dismiss this branch of our subject, it may be necessary just to inquire what is consistent with this declaration of all the counsel of God. And I will observe that *two* things are essential to this.

The *first* is, inability to do justice to the whole of the counsel of God. It is not in the power of any man, whatever he may think. He may go through in a course of lectures the Assembly’s Catechism, the less and the larger; but he has not gone through the *Bible*. He may preach on the thirty-nine articles of another church—or the hundred and thirty-nine, if he can find any church possessed of so many: but let him not imagine he has explained the whole of the Scriptures. No; after all we have done we must exclaim, “ O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out.” And what a proof is this profundity, this grandeur, of the divinity of the Bible itself! What other book of the same size could bear, from age to age, to have thousands of persons

ability and learning to be always examining it, and always discussing it, and yet always finding something fresh, and nothing entirely exhausted!

There is another thing consistent with declaring all the counsel of God—and that is, his enlarging more on some topics than on others. We ought to distinguish, not only between the *true* and the *false* in divinity, but also between the *true* and the *true*. Every thing equally *true* is not equally *important*: there are *essential* truths, and there are *circumstantial* truths. In a general way you will find that things are here made plain in proportion as they are important. So with regard to such questions as these—"How shall I come before the Lord?" "What shall I do to be saved?" "How can I be justified, or sanctified?" and so on; here things are made so plain that the wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein; so that he may run that readeth. We should distinguish between things that differ, not only as to their truth, but as to their importance. The railing is ornamental and useful, and therefore not to be dispensed with: still this is not to be compared with the foundation and the key-stone; *these* are *essential* to the edifice. The omission of certain doctrines (for we can appeal here to facts), the omission or the concealment of certain doctrines always leads to spiritual dearth—the work of conversion is not known, nor are persons delivered from the spirit of the present world, and dedicated entirely unto God. On the other hand, where the leading truths of the Gospel are preached, however imperfectly; where, as Mr. Hervey used to say, the sum of divinity is comprehended under the three R's—Ruin, Redemption, and Regeneration—ruin by Adam, redemption by Christ, and regeneration by the Holy Spirit; where these leading truths are dwelt upon, whatever else may be mixed with them, and however imperfectly they may be often discussed, yet we see they are available: God gives testimony to the word of his grace, sinners are saved, and believers built up in their most holy faith.

Thirdly, observe THE APOSTLE'S CONSCIOUSNESS OF THIS: "For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." It is not the language of pride, but the language of conviction, founded on the importance of the cause itself. We must explain here for two or three moments.

"Whatsoever things," says the Apostle, "were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." Again says he, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." As, therefore, nothing is useless, the separation or concealment of any part of it must be to hinder a benefit and a blessing. Partial knowledge will sometimes be found to injure more than entire ignorance. Indeed what in fact is all error but some truth pushed too far, or not far enough—some truth taken out of its place, some truth taken alone, without other truths which qualify it and render it not only safe but useful? The Apostle therefore says to the Ephesians that the ministry of the word is intended "for the perfecting of the saints, and the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come in the unity of the faith, and the knowledge of the Son of God, unto the perfect man," (that is, in knowledge) "unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" in knowledge. And then as a consequence of it, he says, "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried

about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning and craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive." They are to be prepared at all points. So he tells the Hebrews—" Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace." " Grace" there means the *Gospel*, the truths of the *Gospel*: it is a good thing for the heart to be established with these. You cannot take away *some* parts of the body without destroying it; and you cannot take *any* of them without injuring and defacing it. There are no preachers but will preach parts of the *Gospel*. You cannot help this. This is not preaching the *Gospel* however: it is the bringing forward the *whole* of it in connexion with the person, the mediation, the work, and the sufferings of Christ, or, as the Apostle says, " the truth as it is in Jesus," that deserves this name, or that is effectual for the purpose either of breaking the whole heart or of binding up a broken one.

And as these peculiarities injure the efficacy of the *Gospel*, so they mar its beauty. This arises from the connexion and harmony of the whole. " As to cloth," says Lord Bacon, " a small pattern may enable us to judge fairly and safely of the whole piece: but the Bible is like a fine arrass or tapestry, which though a remnant may assure us of the colours and the richness of the stuff, yet the hangings never appear to their true advantage but when displayed in their full dimensions, and seen together." Let every minister remember this maxim. The Apostle knew that without this he could not have discharged his obligation. He knew that he was not answerable for his acceptance, nor answerable for his success; but for the use of means, for diligence and fidelity, he knew he *was*, and thus states that he should be " a sweet savour of Christ in them that are saved, and in them that perish: to the one we are a savour of death unto death, and to the other the savour of life unto life." Hence his comfort in the work: for though there is nothing meritorious in any thing we do, yet pleasure always arises from discharging the will of God. Therefore the Apostle in another instance says, " Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward." And he knew that this satisfaction of his would bear attestation: " I call God," says he, " to witness that I am pure from the blood of all men:" and the blood of souls is the most defiling, and cries out the most for vengeance. He knew that none would be able in the great day to come forward and say, " You deceived me, and thereby slew me: you preached Peace, peace, when destruction and misery were before me. You were blind, and I was blind, and now we are both fallen into the ditch." He knew that he should be acquitted then by every conscience; and he knew that the Judge also would say, " Well done, good and faithful servant! enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

In the conclusion of this subject we may learn two things.

First, *here is the rule to guide and justify ministers*. Considering the mixture there is always in every congregation, and especially large ones, it is probable, if not certain, that the preacher who declares all the counsel of God will give some offence. But must he on this account *decline* it? Is he to do any thing by partiality? " If I seek to please men," says the Apostle, " I

should not be the servant of Christ." Daniel therefore reproved Belshazzar as if he had been a common man, and exhorted him to "break off his sin by righteousness, and his iniquities by showing mercy to the poor; and it might be a lengthening of his tranquillity." John's doctrine was as rough as the garments he wore, and he dared to tell majesty to its face that it was not above law any more than one of his subjects: "It is not lawful for thee to have her." Paul knew the character and the conduct of Felix and Drusilla, but "reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come." He knew how the Corinthians regarded him, but says he, "It is a light thing with me to be judged of you or of man's judgment: he that judgeth me is the Lord." A minister therefore should be able to say,

"Careless, myself a dying man,  
Of dying men's esteem;  
Happy, O God, if thou approve,  
Though all besides condemn."

He must, from his knowledge generally of the congregation, conjecture what will be acceptable to some, and what will even be disagreeable to others: and there he does not willingly offend. But in my studying of a subject alone I never think whether such and such persons will like it or dislike it: the thought never enters my mind. I endeavour to ascertain what is the meaning of the Holy Ghost in the text, what I am to proclaim from it, and to pray that I may not handle the Word of God deceitfully, but "by manifestation of the truth commend myself to every man's conscience, whether they will hear, or whether they forbear." "It is a poor sermon," says George Whitfield, "that gives no offence—that neither makes the hearer displeased with himself nor with the preacher." It was a noble eulogium that Louis the fourteenth passed on one of his preachers, Masillon: "I don't know how it is: when I hear my other chaplains I admire them; but when I hear Masillon I always go away dissatisfied with myself." There could not be a finer encomium.

Then, lastly, we see *what is the duty of hearers*. For if we are not to shun to *declare* all the counsel of God, you are bound to *hear* and to *welcome* all. However mysterious to your reason, however mortifying to the pride of your **heart**, however it may reprove or censure you, you are not to deem the minister your enemy because he tells you the truth; but rather to lay open your **bosoms** to the admission of his whole admonition and reproof, remembering what Solomon says, that "faithful are the wounds of a friend;" to approach a place of worship in the disposition of Eli towards Samuel—"What hath the Lord said unto thee? Tell me, I pray thee: withhold not a whit from me." Or as Cornelius and his family said to Peter when he came, "We are all here present before God to hear all things that are commanded thee of God." You are not to hang down your heads and go away dissatisfied because you have not been comforted. Is comfort every thing you want in the divine life? You are not to say, "I have had no new information." Is knowledge all you want? or is that all you come for? If the subject be not adapted to yourself, it may be the very subject another wants. If you are familiar with it, another in the assembly may never have heard it before. If you retain the truth, and repetition may seem irksome, you should remember that there are others who are forgetful, and who need to have their minds stirred up by way of remembrance. You should, therefore, instead of wishing to limit the preacher,

encourage him to go with you through the land in the length and in the breadth of it—encourage him not only to plant, but water—not only to found, but to build.

Let us conclude with the language of the Apostle to the Hebrews: “ I have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God ; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness : for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. Therefore leaving (comparatively) the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection ; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.” And this will we do, if God permit.

## JOHN WICKLIFFE.

“ JOHN WICKLIFFE, ‘the morning star of the reformation,’ was born at a village of the same name in Yorkshire, A.D. 1324. He became a commoner of Queen’s College, and afterwards of Merton College, Oxford, where, in 1360, he distinguished himself by asserting the rights of the university against the friars who inveigled the students to their convents. Wickliffe wrote some tracts against those mendicants, for which he was chosen master of Balliol College; and soon afterwards Archbishop Islip appointed him warden of Canterbury hall. On the death of that prelate, his successor, Langham, issued a mandate, depriving Wickliffe of the wardenship, which the scholars refused to obey. Wickliffe himself appealed to the Pope, who confirmed the decree of the archbishop. About this time Wickliffe having gained the favour of John of Gaunt Duke of Lancaster, he was appointed the king’s chaplain, and presented to the living of Lutterworth, in Leicestershire. In A.D. 1372, he took his doctor’s degree, and read lectures in divinity. Not long after this he was appointed one of the king’s commissioners, to require of the Pope that he would not interfere in ecclesiastical benefices. This treaty was carried on at Bruges; but nothing was concluded; upon which the Parliament passed an act against the papal usurpations. This encouraged Wickliffe to go on in exposing the tyranny of the Pope, who, in 1377, denounced the reformer as a heretic, and required the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London to proceed in judgment against him. Wickliffe, however, was supported by the Duke of Lancaster and Earl Percy, who appeared with him at St. Paul’s, February 19th, 1378; and the example of Richard, the Archbishop of Armagh, animated him to protest against the encroachments of his own order. Being thus countenanced, he undertook a translation of the Scriptures into English, which work he accomplished, and thereby increased the number of his enemies. In 1381 he ventured to attack the doctrine of transubstantiation, in a work, entitled, “ De Blasphemia;” which being condemned at Oxford, he went thither and made a declaration of his faith, and professed his resolution to defend it with his blood. The marriage of the king with Anne of Luxemburg proved very advantageous to Wickliffe; for she was a most exemplary princess, and a great friend to scriptural knowledge. By her means, the writings of the English reformer were sent to Germany, where they afterwards produced an abundant harvest. On leaving Oxford, Wickliffe received a citation from the Pope to appear before him at Rome; but he answered, “ that Christ had taught him to obey God rather than man.” He died of the palsy at Lutterworth, A.D. 1384; but his bones were taken up and burned as the bones of a heretic, thirteen years after his death. He was publicly condemned as a heretic at the Council of Constance, A.D. 1415, thirty-one years after his decease.

“ About this time the Waldenses were very zealous in diffusing their principles, and opposing Popery. Persons travelled as hawkers, and, on entering the house, proposed their articles for sale; if these were not wanted, and a friendly disposition appeared, an offer was made to read part of the New

Testament. As they were encouraged, so they proceeded, and gave a full account of their principles, and exposed the errors of the Church of Rome, and expounded at large the Word of God. A full and very interesting account of their labours is given by Mr. Robinson. The Wickliffites of that day also continued to increase ; they were generally called Lollards, from Walter Lollard, a very celebrated preacher, who was burnt at Cologne about 1350. A society of these persons was formed at Antwerp, whose zeal, piety, benevolence, and general excellence of Christian character, had very great influence ; they grew and multiplied both in England and on the continent. Great numbers were destroyed by the Church of Rome ; but God was with them. The works of Wickliffe obtained very great influence ; and the day was dawning, in the light of which we rejoice. Sir John Oldcastle, who is also called Lord Cobham, which title he obtained by marrying the heiress of the nobleman of that name, was a zealous adherent of Wickliffe, for which he incurred the hatred of the clergy. He was a great favourite of Henry V. The purity of his religious principles, and the ardour of his zeal, exposed him also to many painful persecutions. At length he was sent to the Tower, but escaped thence ; and soon afterwards, in the night, when a company of Lollards, about one hundred, were met for worship in St. Giles's Fields, which at that time was an uncultivated tract of ground, overgrown with bushes and trees, he was condemned to death, as one of the rebels. It was said by their enemies that twenty thousand Lollards were met there, with Lord Cobham at their head ; a troop of men was hastily brought to the spot ; some were immediately slain by the soldiers ; about sixty were taken prisoners, of whom thirty-four were hanged, and seven others hanged and burned. Sir John, however, was not at this meeting, but it sealed his doom ; a bill of attainder was passed on him, and a thousand marks was set on his head, and a perpetual exemption from taxes promised to any town that should secure him. After a concealment of nigh four years, he was apprehended in Montgomeryshire, conveyed to London, and received sentence of death : he was executed in St. Giles's Fields, December 25th, 1417. Echard says, that he was suspended over the fire by a chain fastened round his middle ; he was thus roasted to death over a slow fire. This was done whilst his patron, Henry V. was meeting his enemies in France, otherwise he had probably been preserved."

MANN'S LECTURES ON ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY AND NONCONFORMITY.

## THE RIGHT OF PRIVATE JUDGMENT IN MATTERS OF RELIGION.

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REV. J. BURNET,  
FETTER LANE CHAPEL, OCTOBER 1, 1835\*.

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"Prove all things."—1 THESSALONIANS, v. 21.

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IN the present age of the world it may perhaps be thought somewhat singular that the Christian Instruction Society should select for the consideration of those whom they invite to this meeting, such a subject as The Right to Private Judgment in Matters of Religion. It may be stated that no one can, or dare, prevent the exercise of this right, and that upon this account it may be altogether unnecessary to take any trouble or occupy any portion of our time in considering such a question.

Now I will remark, that so far is this from being the fact, namely, that there is no necessity for considering such a question, we should rather regard the period at which we have arrived, and the freedom of thinking by which it is distinguished, as reasons for settling upon fixed and definite ground our right to exercise this freedom of thought. It is very possible that, at an unexpected moment, we may be assailed by the cry that this freedom of thought is incentiousness. It is very possible that, at some unexpected moment, we may be informed that we have no right to exercise this independence of mind and of judgment. And perhaps the length of time through which we have taken it for granted that it is our right thus to exercise our individual judgment, may prevent us from being able to reply to the plea that may be raised against us, and may have prevented us from reverting to the foundation on which we have actually been exercising the right at issue.

Now to prevent this, while we enjoy, and are thankful that we do enjoy, the exercise of private judgment, not only in matters of religion, but in all matters, we should never forget frequently to recur to first principles, and to see clearly why we exercise this right, and ascertain that we have a divine authority for it. We are then ready against an evil day, for which at present we may not look; and we are then ready for circumstances which at present we may not anticipate; we are ready to contend earnestly for this very important and this very essential feature in the faith of the Gospel.

It is, then, for the purpose of thus directing your minds, that I have read the motto which I intend as a prefix to the observations I have to submit to you: but before entering upon the reasons I would adduce in support of the right of private judgment in matters of religion, I would first notice—(although

\* The first of a Course of Lectures by Ministers in connexion with the Christian Instruction Society.

this may not be a usual method, perhaps it may be found not at all an improper one)—I would first notice *the objections that are taken against the exercise of this right.*

It is said, first of all, If private judgment is to be exercised in matters of religion, then every individual will have his own religion, and we may expect to have as many religions as there are individuals making a profession of Christianity. If that be the fact, if we were, in asserting the exercise of private judgment as a right belonging to every individual, to run the hazard of multiplying religions, we answer at once, that this is only a consequence arising out of the right of private judgment from the depravity of human nature, and not arising out of the exercise of private judgment itself. It is very possible, nay, very certain, that if the imperfect children of men had all the liberty and privileges belonging to the angels in heaven, consequences very different from those which characterize the history of angels would arise out of the character of the children of men. But no one would say that these consequences were the necessary effects of the liberty which men would then enjoy. The angels are perfect in the liberty and privileges they enjoy, and no evil consequences result from the exercise of their liberty and their privileges: why, then, should it be supposed that evil consequences must necessarily be connected with privilege and liberty? The same liberty, however, and the same privileges would be found connected with, though not producing, evil consequences in the case of the children of men: and then, if these consequences arise not from the privileges in question, whence do they come? We answer at once, From the depravity of human nature. Deal with that depravity as abusing the right of private judgment, but assail not the right itself, as if it were the author of the evil of which you complain. If private judgment is so exercised by depraved and fallen man as to be abused, then let nothing but the depravity that is guilty of the abuse be arraigned for the consequences: and if that depravity is so arraigned we shall be the last to attempt its defence. But if, instead of assailing the depravity of man for abusing the right of private judgment, we assail the right itself and forbid its exercise, we are mistaking altogether the source whence the evil springs of which we complain, and we are not taking the method by which the evil may be prevented.

But again: let us suppose that the right of private judgment may be interdicted to the many, lest each may create in its exercise a religion of his own; in what way are we to prevent these evil consequences by interdicting the right? Shall we issue a decree clothed with all the formalities of authority; and shall we insist that that decree, by personal pains and penalties, shall be observed, and that private judgment shall be in no case exercised? Let me ask whether this is possible. Have we the minds of men in our hands? We can interdict, very true, the *expression* of private judgment, but the exercise of it in the minds of individuals we cannot interfere with. The slave, clad in the iron fetters with which his tyrant holds him in degrading bondage, has still, in the midst of that bondage, his private judgment: and with the mind, which is free whilst you bind his body, you cannot interfere; and the current of his thoughts will flow with the same freedom when you have pronounced your resolve that he shall think with you, as if you had permitted him to “prove all things,” according to the words of our text.

We say, then, in reply to the objection, that the evil results not from the

exercise of private judgment, but from the depravity of human nature ; and we say, secondly, that you cannot prevent the exercise of private judgment if you would, although you may suppress the expression of its dictates.

But it may be said, If we can suppress the expression of its dictates, and we cannot pretend to any thing more, is this not a certain degree of good achieved, and do we not prevent evil ? In what way, my friends ? To prevent the expression of the dictates of private judgment, and to supersede them by some authorized teaching, supposes an infallible instructor. How do we know that the public judgment exercised by the ecclesiastical council, or exercised by any body whatever, may not be as pernicious in its results and its workings, as the private judgment of each individual ? Yea, we know that this has been the case in the past ages of the Church : almost every heresy has been at one time or other protected and taught by public authority ; and almost every orthodox sentiment has by the same public authority been put down. We have, therefore, no infallible teacher to which to apply : if we were to give up the exercise of our private judgment, we have no infallible guide that can direct us in order to ascertain what the will of God is in public authority, if we were to yield our personal reason.

It is impossible, then, to suppress, by any means whatever, the exercise of private judgment—equally impossible to substitute public authority for it, without involving in the possibility an infallible teacher, an infallible guide, which no one pretends to possess : and therefore, after all the objections that can be urged against the right of private judgment, we must abandon them all as untenable, and have recourse to the motto in the text—“ Prove all things.”

Having noticed the leading objections that may be urged against the right of private judgment, let me direct your attention to some considerations that may be urged in support of that right.

And first of all I would say, that the right of private judgment in matters of religion (for it is here that we assert that right), appears to have been intended as the *duty*—not merely the privilege—of *every individual to whom the word of God should come*. Let us take for example the epistle of which our text forms a part, and let us see to whom this epistle was directed ; and we shall then be able rightly to understand the meaning of the expression which I have chosen as the text. At the beginning of the epistle we find the Apostle setting out thus : “ Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians, which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ.” Now you will observe that this was not addressed to the clergy, but to the Church—the Church of the Thessalonians ; not to any public functionary, but to the private members. Such is the address of the Apostle ; and after the Apostle, and his brethren whom he unites with himself in the epistle before us, Silvanus and Timotheus—after the Apostle had thus addressed the private members of the Church, what does he tell them to do ? Does he tell them to listen to the public functionaries, and to accept the law at their lips ? Does he tell them to accept every thing from those who might administer the law amongst them, and to reject no part of their injunctions, how much soever these injunctions might be at war with their own judgments ? No ; but the Apostle, and Timotheus, and Silvanus, inspired and infallible teachers of the mind of God to the Church of Thessalonica, say, “ Prove all things.” Now

nothing could be more indicative of the right of the people, as recognized by Paul, and Timotheus, and Silvanus, to exercise their private judgment, than this very injunction. To all the church of Thessalonica, to the men and to the women of that church, without any discrimination of rank or talent, or information, he addresses the common injunction, "Prove all things." if any individual were to say, "Nay, but the church at Thessalonica must defer to authority," we should at once say, Where is the ground of the deference? It occurs no where in the epistles; they are addressed without any exception, and without distinction in the epistle of the high pre-eminence of any authority; and they are all in common commanded (not recommended), they are all in common commanded to "prove all things." Nothing can be plainer, nothing can be more obvious than this.

Now if we go further yet—although we might consider this to be conclusive, for there is actually a command to exercise the right of private judgment, not merely an assertion on its behalf—but if we were to go further than this, and look to the other epistles, we find those epistles in precisely the same style. The epistle to the Romans is directed, "To *all* that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints." The first and the second epistles to the Corinthians are addressed in the same style: "To *the church* at Corinth." We find the epistle to the Galatians in the same form: in short, all the epistles to the churches are in precisely the same form, except one, and that is the epistle to the church at Philippi, and we find that epistle opening thus: "To all the saints which are at Philippi, *with* the bishops and deacons;" but *first* of all, to *the church*. That is the only epistle in which the public functionaries are introduced at all in the superscription of the epistle, and there they are introduced only *after* the church has been placed before them. If, therefore, we find the epistles to all the churches thus addressed to the members of the churches generally and individually, and not to the public functionaries—except in the one case to which I have referred, in which they are placed behind, and the members of the church brought up to the most prominent position—if that be the case, is there not a proof then in all these epistles, that it was intended that every member should exercise his right of private judgment in the exposition and in the application of it?

Nay more, if we come to consider the epistles that were addressed to individuals—that, for example, addressed to Timothy, and that addressed to Titus, and that "to the elect lady and her children," and that to "the beloved Gaius," do we find any thing in these epistles clothing these individuals with the authority of interpreting against the private judgment of those they taught the oracles of truth? Nay, they are commanded "in meekness to instruct those that oppose themselves;" not to dictate to them on the ground of authority. They are commanded to reprove and to rebuke, and to exhort, and to persuade; but they are no where commanded to exercise authority, if opposed, over the right of private judgment exercised by the individuals in question.

If, therefore, we find all the public epistles thus directed to the church generally, and not to the public functionaries, and if we find all the individual and private epistles directed to the parties on private business, like that of Philemon, or about the conduct which individuals should pursue in the church, like that of Timothy and Titus, while nothing on the subject of interference

with the right of private judgment is introduced, can we have a stronger argument for maintaining the sacredness of this right? I think not.

Now we have not only the fact, that the church at Thessalonica was addressed by the command, "prove all things," notwithstanding the truth that that epistle was addressed to all the members—we have not only the further fact, that all the other public epistles are of the same description, addressed to all the members of the churches—we have not only the third fact, that all the private epistles omit, and do not clothe the individual addressed with any authority against the right of private judgment, and do not contain any disparagement of the exercise of that right—but we have the additional fact, and it is a great and important one, that every one of us must give *an account of himself unto God*; and, consequently, this account implies the exercise of the right of private judgment. If we are to give an account of ourselves unto God; if we are to appear at the judgment-seat of Christ, and to give there an account of the deeds done in the body; if we must have our own destiny fixed on the judgments we have formed, and the practices which have followed on the judgments we have formed; would it not be the greatest absurdity in the government of God, for a moment to suppose that he intended that after all the account each of us should be compelled to give of himself, we should be at the same time compelled to pursue the dictates which another might deliver, in opposition to our own judgment upon the matter? Shall we give an account of the deeds and the practices to which we have been stimulated by those who would not allow us to think for ourselves? Shall we be called upon to answer at the bar of the Infinite Jehovah for that which another commands us to do, when we were convinced we ought not to do it, or for that which another commands us not to do, when we were convinced we ought to do it? Shall we give an account of ourselves unto God at the last, whilst we are permitted to take no account of ourselves? Shall we be in the keeping of others in every step of our progress on the earth, until at last we arrive at the presence of God, and then, and then only, shall we be independent of the jurisdiction, of the help, or of the censure of other men? Shall we carry mental slavery with us all the time that we are in our state of probation, and as soon as our eternity is to melt away beneath the sentence of the everlasting God, shall we then stand on our own foundation, and shall we never be permitted to do so till then? There is something in this so monstrous, there is something so inconsistent with the elevated views that we are taught to form of God, there is something in this so inconsistent with the equity and justice of his high administration, that we cannot for a moment entertain it. If God tells us, and we know he does, that every one of us must give an account of himself to God, he means to tell us, that every one of us is allowed to "prove all things" against the day of that account. If he tells us that every one of us is to give an account of himself unto God, he tells us, at the same time, that we are to employ our judgment in ascertaining how we are to walk before the day of that high final sentence. If, for example, the laws of the land were promulgated in the midst of us, and we were reminded that we must be accountable to the tribunal by which these laws are executed; but if we were informed, at the same time, that there are certain public functionaries appointed to tell us what in every case we are to do, but that when we are called to the tribunal of the land, these functionaries are not to be accountable for

the advice which we are to be accountable for following; it is easy to see there could be no greater absurdity in legislation than this. Is it possible that there could be found one that would for a moment defend this? And yet, notwithstanding the absurdity of the case, whether we refer it to the government of God or man, it is a fact that there have been, and a fact that there still are, thousands, and tens of thousands, who would assert the right of uninspired and fallible authority over the exercise of private judgment, and would deny to man its exercise.

Let us, however, my friends, revert to the text, "Prove all things;" and the moment we come to the plain and obvious meaning of this command, we are relieved from all the absurdities at which we have been glancing. I am commanded to "rejoice in my youth, and to let my heart cheer me in the days of my youth;" but I am reminded, that "for all these things God will bring me into judgment." Then I am commanded, as the truth has been revealed, to believe and to live, or to reject the testimony of God and perish. Then I am commanded to prove all things as I pass onwards, "that I may give in my account with joy at last, and not with grief:" and I then understand my responsibility; I feel the just weight of it. I know that it justly belongs to me to be responsible to the tribunal of God, when he permits me thus to think, and thus to act on my own judgment: and I come then to the passage before me with the experience of its truth, and its power, when it says, "Prove all things."

Such, then, my friends, being the arguments derived from Scripture, in support of the exercise of the right of private judgment, let me direct your attention to another argument in support of that right, derived from the nature of the powers and faculties that God has given us. Why was it that God gave you the power of judging at all? Was it merely that you might judge in the things of time? Was it merely that you might judge concerning the things that are all perishing? Was it merely that you might preserve a short life upon the earth, and that you might carry your judgment no further? Is it possible that any one who thinks soundly and philosophically on the doings of God, and the way in which he suits the means to the end in all cases, could for a moment suppose that he gives to mankind the exercise of private judgment at all for the mere purpose of employing it in the affairs of time, while he forbids it in reference to the affairs of eternity? Would he allow you to judge what you are to eat, or what you are to drink, or wherewithal you shall be clothed, or wherewithal you are to provide a place in which you are to dwell in safety in the land; and would he lead you to exercise your judgment upon these things for a few passing years, and then relinquish the judgment so employed, and lie down in the tomb, while he would overlook the bright and the extended immortality that lies beyond the grave, and tell you that this faculty, important as it is, was never intended to be exercised in reference to eternity? Would he give you judgment for time, and none for immortality? judgment for earth, and none for heaven? judgment for the state of your trial and probation, and none at all in reference to the state of your ultimate and eternal destiny? There is something in this so extremely absurd, that we cannot entertain it. The faculty of judgment was given that every thing might be proved, according to the text, "Prove all things," and that the result of that proof might be, the application of the best principles to your

conduct in time, that you might be by them made meet for the noblest destiny you could enjoy in heaven.

If such, my friends, be the arguments that may be adduced in support of the exercise of private judgment in matters of religion, without going further into any other argument, let me ask, Are they not conclusive? What is it that we find defective in them? Let me repeat their outline: the epistles of a public nature are addressed to all the members of the church: in these epistles the strongest injunctions are laid down to the exercise of private judgment: the epistles that are addressed to individuals never interdict the exercise of that right: our accountability to God proves, as it is an individual accountability, that we must exercise the right; for individual judgment implies individual responsibility: the powers and faculties which God has given us tell us they were not intended to be shut up to time, but were intended to have reference to eternity; and therefore the exercise of the right of private judgment will be found to be established by the very fact, that we are possessed of such powers and such faculties. Incapable, therefore, of taking any other view of the argument than this, and incapable of admitting that there is any force in the objections with which I set out, viewing it in the light in which I have endeavoured to place it, I cannot see any thing in the Word of God, in the consequences of the right of private judgment, or in the nature of the faculties that we have received from God, that would not maintain, that it is not only our right, but our duty, to "prove all things."

That being the case, as an inference from the right of private judgment, which you see I should maintain to the utmost possible extent, I would say, there are certain duties to be discharged; and to these duties I would now direct your attention.

It is your duty, in the first place, *to search the Scriptures*. For what have we about which to judge, unless we have the Word of Truth, the gospel of salvation? To speak of the exercise of private judgment where we have laid up no means to direct it; to speak of the exercise of private judgment where we have acquired no information on the subject to be judged; would be to involve ourselves in the utmost possible measure of absurdity. And to obtain the right of the exercise of private judgment, without ministering that faculty to the knowledge and the glory of God, as shewn in the face of Jesus Christ, would be to contend for a privilege without once intending to enjoy it; and for a right which you never meant to maintain. We criminate ourselves deeply before God, if, while we are contending for the right of private judgment, we are not searching the oracles about which alone that faculty can possibly be engaged. What, my friends, should we think of a judge who insisted on his right to give a decision, on his prerogative to give judgment and to pronounce sentence, while he refused to listen to any witnesses, while he refused to regard any evidence, while he withheld his attention from any thing offered to him, and in this ignorance of all connected with the judgment he was to pronounce was found yet insisting, that as he had the right to pronounce he would do it? Should we not regard such a judge as unworthy of the office he held? Should we not regard him as destitute of all the qualities necessary for the discharge of the duties of that office? Nay, should we not at once petition the legislature of the land to have him dismissed, by the interference of the highest

authority, in order that we might save the lives, and the properties, and the privileges, of our fellow-men from the unrighteous decisions of such a judge? We are in the same predicament if we are insisting on the exercise of the right of private judgment in matters of religion, and are not informing ourselves on the contents of the Book of God. We have nothing upon which to form a decision in religion but the Bible. We have no means to assist us, except the means supplied by it: and if the Word of God is neglected by us, we have no means on which to rest our decisions; and we are giving judgment without evidence, and insisting on pronouncing a determination without looking for a moment into the testimony that is accessible.

If that be the case, then, you can easily see the criminality of judging, the criminality of exercising the right of private judgment, without examining the Word of Truth. But I do not say, Withhold the exercise of your judgment, and let the Word of Truth be neglected, and then you are consistent. No; I should say that this would be an ungodly consistency. It would be like the judge to whom I referred, if he were to insist that he would resign the decision and refuse the evidence too; the consequence would be general confusion and anarchy throughout the land; for crime would go unpunished, and the laws would remain unobserved. In the same way, if you withhold the exercise of private judgment, because you refuse the Word of Truth—there is a consistency, to be sure, here, but it is a wicked and unhallowed consistency; a consistency which will be at once your shame and your ruin when you come to the tribunal of heaven. It is therefore our duty to search the Scriptures, and to search them more and more, that we may have something on which to exercise our judgment, which it is our right in defiance of the highest authority to exercise, in reference to the things of God.

Another duty arises out of the consideration of the exercise of private judgment in religion—the duty of *stimulating others by teaching them the great things of God*. If it be our duty to exercise the right of private judgment, and at the same time our duty to make ourselves acquainted with the Word of God, it is equally the duty of our fellow-men around us to exercise this right, and to inform themselves on the contents of the Word of God, that they may exercise it properly. If that be the case, we are bound to tell them so; and the diffusion of the glad tidings of the glorious Gospel of the ever-blessed God naturally follows as an incumbent duty on every one of us if we would encourage the due and proper exercise of the right of private judgment.

Finally, we learn another duty from the subject we have been considering—that is, the duty of *duly appreciating* the statements of those who would hold out revelation as unworthy of your acceptance because it tends to trammel the powers of the mind, and to contract the views which we might otherwise entertain upon a large scale. Never permit the enemies of revelation to persuade you that these are its consequences. You see we defend the right of private judgment in matters of religion; we do not wish to impose spiritual bonds. We answer and we rebut the objections made to the exercise of this right, and press it home on you as a solemn obligation. We direct your attention to the duties which follow from the exercise of this right; and we tell you if they are not met in the free and willing exercise of your own powers, no other attempt at discharging these duties can be accepted at the throne of grace. We address you as men: we speak as unto wise men; judge ye what

**we say.** We wish to put no yoke upon you that you ought not to bear ; the only yoke we impose is the Word of God. And while we do this, if there are those who would contract the powers of your mind, and the views you entertain, and trammel the exercise of your faculties in the matter of religion, always let it be remembered that this is not our case, for we apprise you of the liberty with which Christ has made you free.

Then let me leave with you the consideration of this important right ; let no man take it from you : but while you hold it, hold it conscientiously, exercise it honestly, direct it by the whole Word of God, and the examination of all its contents : and when you have done so you will have thus " proved all things," and will be enabled to " hold fast that which is good." Asserting, therefore, the right of private judgment, go forth acting upon that right, and examining evidence : and while you feel yourselves compelled to decide, let your decision be grounded on the evidence which the Word of God contains.

## THE BIBLE THE WORD OF GOD AND THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT

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ST. MARK'S CHURCH, PENTONVILLE, OCTOBER 4, 1835.

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"The sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God."—**EPHESIANS, vi. 17.**

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IT was my privilege, last evening, to meet many of you in the house of prayer, and, after offering up our supplications together at the throne of grace, I endeavoured, as you may remember, to bring before you some brief biographical history of the life, sufferings, and labours, and the peaceful death of Miles Coverdale, Bishop of Exeter, who, three centuries since, as on this very day, completed the first entire version of the Holy Bible in the English language. This day we meet again in the house and presence of God, we will hope, under the blessed teaching influence of the Holy Spirit. I do not intend to enter upon any point upon which real Christians can at all differ; on the contrary, I purpose to keep very close to common principles.

This Sabbath-day is a high day: from one end of Great Britain to the other, we hope and trust that the ministers of God's Word and sacraments will be calling the attention of their people to the supreme excellency, the supreme importance, and perfect sufficiency of God's holy Word. Upon this point, then, where the faithful servants of Christ may all agree, let us meet: we have our minor differences, and we attach to them no very small measure of importance either; but on this day we hold out to all the Protestant churches the right hand of Christian fellowship, while we commemorate this great and glorious event, and bless God and take courage. I am not, indeed, going to pass a penegyric upon the character and labours of Miles Coverdale: a faithful man of God he was; and mark how he has risen to honour. He died in comparative obscurity and want: he asked, as you may remember I told you last night, but for a small portion of this world's goods; he said, "That would be quite enough for poor Miles, who had but a little longer to live;" and with difficulty did he obtain that. But little did he think that three centuries, or nearly three centuries, after his death, his name would be mentioned from one end of Great Britain to another, and that with marked honour and praise. But we have no command (God forbid we should, have) to glorify the saints, and martyrs, the bishops and pastors of God's word departed to their rest. No; "They glorified God in me;" that is the principle. All glory be to God, and to God alone, and to God for ever. I come now rather to direct your attention to that invaluable treasure which, on this day three centuries ago, appeared for the first time in an English dress before the world. Up to this period parts only, I should say, of the Holy Scriptures

had been rendered into the vernacular tongue ; but it was not till then that the entire Volume of Inspiration appeared in our own tongue.

Now, then, let me call off your attention from all minor matters : we have our differences, and there are times and seasons when we can state them, and bring them forward to the people : but this day be sacred to the holy Book : this day be sacred to that common cause which is so dear to the heart of every Protestant and every Christian. My text will lead me to pay great attention to one book—the best book in the world, the only book that can make us wise unto eternal salvation : “ The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” Let me consider, then, the Bible in these two lights : first, as it is the word of the Lord ; and then, secondly, as it is the sword of the Spirit.

First, as it is THE WORD OF THE LORD. It is a very bold claim ; and if the Bible did not itself establish its own claim, no power of reason could establish that claim for it. I shall not here go into the arguments that are commonly brought forward to illustrate the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, or the authenticity of the Sacred Writings ; but I would ask this : Did you ever meet with a man of plain common sense, and plain common honesty, that sat carefully down devoutly to read God’s holy Book, and rose from the study of that book with the conviction, that the Bible was not the word of God ? I never met with such a man : on the contrary, I believe in my conscience, that the great reason why we have so many unbelievers in the Bible, is that we have so many who never read the Bible. You may remember the circumstance of a distinguished man of rank, a nobleman of high birth and higher talents, of a great and splendid mind, who had great scruples as to the New Testament being divinely inspired ; he had scruples as to the fact of our Lord’s resurrection ; and he determined to write a refutation of the New Testament. But he had the singular wisdom, first of all to determine to do one thing—to read it carefully through first : and this reading, under the blessing of God, led to a different conclusion ; he came to be fully convinced that “ all Scripture is given by inspiration of God,” and he wrote one of the ablest pieces that we have in our language, on the subject of the resurrection of the Son of God. I shall not, therefore, take up your time this morning in endeavouring to shew you that the Holy Bible, as commonly received among us, is the word of God : but I would say, Did you ever know any man of common sense and common honesty, who ever sat down to read that book through, with prayer to God for assistance from heaven, who did not rise from such perusal convinced that it was indeed the truth, the word of the living God ? I know there are those who deny this ; but are they persons whose evidence would be admitted in any common court of justice ? I remember a remark made by that excellent man of God, the present Bishop of Calcutta, in his little work on “ the Evidences,” in which he has comprised nearly all the best remarks of those who had gone before him. In speaking of some who deny the truth of revelation, he speaks of them under these terms : “ You see them, like the common bully, abusing every thing, censuring every thing, vociferating their objections. Are these persons whose evidence would be taken by a common jury on any statement of fact ? No ; therefore,” says he, “ I pass them by.” Have I in this church to-day a scoffer ? Have I a sceptic ? I can only say this, I never yet met with one who disbelieved the Bible until he began to think it his interest to dis-

believe it; then, when he had broken through the restraints of conscience, when he had cast off the fear of God, when he had rushed on from sin to sin, and from iniquity to iniquity, and was drinking in sin as the thirsty ox drinketh in the water, when he had no longer the restraints connected with God's holy Word and the principles of religion—then the devil furnished him with this idea, “ Believe it is all false ;” and he tried to do it, though he found it hard. O take care in these days of daring infidelity, in these days of abounding iniquity, how you run with the sceptic and the scorner, lest you learn their ways, and at length take your seat among the scornful, where there is very little hope either for time or eternity.

I speak then to you who believe the Scriptures to be the Word of God. What led you to believe them so to be ? If I were to ask this question of some unlettered Christian, some poor uneducated, but sincere and devoutly-minded child of God, I should perhaps have some answer of this sort : “ Really, sir, I know but little of what you call ‘ the evidences ’ of religion, I understand but little of these things ; I am a plain uneducated person : but I feel, sir, when I go and read the Bible, that there is an influence connected with the reading of it that I find connected with no other book. When I am reading it my heart kindles, and my eyes fill with tears ; there is something that tells me, these are not the words of man, that they are not the words of some great clerk, or some great bishop, or learned dignitary of the church ; but that they are the words of the great and the ever blessed God ; and the longer I live, sir, and the more I read that book, the more beauty do I see : never can I read a chapter without seeing something that I never saw before, and something, sir, that makes me wiser and better than I was before.” Yes, my brethren, the Spirit of the living God bears witness with the spirits of the saints of God, that the Bible is the word of God. True, we see nothing ; we behold no personal representation of Deity ; we hear no voice addressed to the outward ear : but there is something that speaks to the inward ear, that speaks to the heart, and declares, “ This is none other than the Word of God.”

And O, tell me what would the real Christian do without his Bible ? Let us suppose for a moment (for thank God it is but a supposition ; you shall not be distressed with a long series of suppositions) but let us suppose for a moment such a case, that the Bibles were ordered from our church desks ; what would those church desks be with our great Bibles gone ? “ What if our Bibles were taken from our churches,” you say, “ they would still be in the family.” But what if all your family Bibles were taken away ? You say, “ There would still be the closet, still the chamber Bible ; small copies of holy Scripture that had travelled with you hundreds of miles, that you would not surrender for any thing.” But suppose you were forced to do it ? What if popery and infidelity should strike the blow, and attempt to take from you your sacred books ; how would you feel ? Many are the tears that would be shed ; you love your Bibles if you love your Saviour. Be thankful that there is no such fear ; be thankful that your sacred books are preserved to you. I would not give much for any preaching long together, without the Bible to refer to : I would engage for it the preacher would go wrong, all the preachers would go wrong, in less than a quarter of a century. And if the people had not got the Bible to refer to, by which to try the words of the preacher, depend upon it the pulpit would soon go wrong. The Bible is the guard of the pulpit, and not the

pulpit the guard of the Bible : the Bible is the guard of the church, and not he church the guard of the Bible.

I speak, then, of the Holy Scriptures this day, as the Word of God. O what an unspeakable mercy that God has ever spoken to man ! But the mercy is enhanced a thousand-fold by this consideration—that he has spoken in the way that he has. How *might* he have spoken to man ? I think I know how he might have spoken : from the shadow of some cloud of blackness and darkness ; that cloud illuminated with the light and glory of the God of heaven : he might have declared that man should never be allowed to approach him ; that he should die in his sins that he had committed, and that in his trespasses which he had trespassed in them he should remain, and his blood be upon his own head, and that he should suffer the vengeance of eternal fire. If God had spoken to us in this way, could we have resisted him ? I trow not. But how has he spoken ? “ Lo a voice came from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased ; hear ye him.” How has he spoken ? “ My son, give me thine heart.” How has he spoken ? “ Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord : though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, and though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” Brethren, be thankful that you have God speaking, and that you have God speaking in such a way. He might have turned a deaf ear to our prayers, but he condescends to listen to the earnest supplications of our hearts. Do you remember those two lines, you have often heard them, and if we live, may often perhaps hear them again :—

“ Thou conquerest all, beneath, above,  
Devils by fear, but men by love.”

We have considered the Bible as the Word of God, let us now consider it as THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT. If you look at the passage from whence my text is taken, you will see a whole cluster of military terms, all of which a soldier might understand. I remember a pious officer who had served under the hero of Waterloo, who became a minister of the Church of England, and soon after was removed to “ the house, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens ; ” I remember his telling me when he first began to read the Scriptures, soon after his conversion to God, how exceedingly he was struck with the number of military terms used in the epistles of St. Paul, and particularly with the singular wisdom, adaptation, point, and power with which they were used. If you look at the context you will find various other parts of the military armour, the shield, and the helmet. But the Apostle puts something into the warrior’s hand ; and what is that ? “ The sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.”

When meditating on this subject, the thought hastily passed my mind, What if it were possible to gather together the swords of all the great and famous princes and generals that have ever lived ; what if we had found the sword of Julius Cæsar, or Alexander, or the great and mighty heroes of ancient and modern times ? And what if, taking them up in our hands, we could recount the mighty battles that have been fought, and think of the plains of Marathon, and other famous places where distinguished heroes have fought, and where soldiers have bled ? Yet here is a sword for you, Christian people, that would make all other swords look little : it is “ the sword of the Spirit, which is the

Word of God." You ask, What has it done? Ask among the enemy, and they will tell you what it has done. Go to the chief enemy, *the devil*; if he could be honest enough to answer the question, and tell you what it has done in his dominions in putting to the rout his forces, he would have to tell of mighty battles, and deeds of valour and of blood, and of success beyond description. What are the three principal features of the character of Satan? I answer, pride, malignity, and deceit: his kingdom and his cause in the world have been maintained by pride, malignity, and deceit. But the sword of the Spirit has been drawn to oppose them. How many a proud, stout-hearted sinner has become humbled and abased: how have the malignant passions of man been put to the rout and the flight by it. Why it has given a clear evidence, that "the fruit of the Spirit was love, and joy, and peace;" all that was fair, all that was peaceful, all that was true, all that was sacred, heavenly, and blessed.

Ask again among those enemies of the Christian, the world and the flesh. Well has it been said, that "the world, the flesh, and the devil, are the devil's triumvirate;" and so they are; but they cannot stand against "the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." *The world*, with all its fascinations, with all its blandishments, with all its allurements, with all its promises, the Christian, taking the sword of the Spirit in his hand, goes forth to meet it: "They overcame it by the word of the testimony, and they loved not their lives unto the death." Take *the flesh* with all its corruptions; what enables the youthful heart to resist, to repel, to conquer? "The sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." He hears the declaration: "If ye live after the flesh ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." He hears the promise, "A new heart will I give unto you;" "from all your filthiness and from all your idols, will I cleanse you." But he feels encouraged especially when he remembers, that connected with all these promises is another, "He giveth his Holy Spirit to them that ask him." Thus the devout reading of the Bible, connected with daily prayer to God for the power and influence of his grace, enables a man to "triumph over the world, the flesh, and the devil, and to continue Christ's faithful soldier and servant unto his life's end."

But leaving the personal case of the Christian in his personal conflict with the enemies of the cross, take another view of the subject: see *heresy* arising; some vital doctrine of Christianity denied; some fatal, damnable heresy arising in the Church; the doctrines, perhaps, of Scripture disallowed or denied. How are you to meet the foe? To argue with him? No such thing. Draw upon him "the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." Go to him with a plain "Thus saith the Lord," and it will do more than all your arguments. We must keep close to the Bible; we must hold the truths on our very hearts: but if error or heresy should arise, draw "the sword of the Spirit," and in the strength of the Lord go forth to meet the enemy. Or, as in the case of the papacy, the rise of the man of sin. What did our blessed Reformers do to meet popery, and to conquer popery? They held up the blessed Bible to the view of the people; they appealed continually to Holy Scripture; they quoted text upon text, and passage upon passage, and chapter upon chapter, and neither popery nor the devil could stand against the plain and unadulterated Word of the living God.

Yes, brethren, this is the armour: God forbid that we should try to put down

any doctrine by uncharitable conduct, or severe or cruel persecution. No; only, for God's sake, do not keep the sword in the scabbard; draw it and use it, know your Bible and read your Bible. The want of Scriptural instruction in a congregation, is the door by which every error comes in. I have no fear for those of my people, and for those families among you, that I know read the Bible; I should have no fear for them if we had a mass-house next door. But it is for those who do not read the Bible, who, except what they hear read in the church, never hear any thing out of the holy Book. I would not trust those people an hour if we had popery near us, with its seductions, with its blandishments, with its paint and its deceptive character: you would be taken in her snare, and many of you would turn Papists. Why? Because you never read the Bible; you do not read the Sacred Scriptures; you do not know the true character of the man of sin: you do not know what the Bible says, the strong language it uses against the apostate church, how it speaks of "the great whore of Babylon," as she is called in the Bible; and I never shall make any apology for using Bible language in a Protestant pulpit. No, dear people, it is the want of reading the Scriptures that is the great bane of the present day. Why do young people in the present day catch the language of the scoffer and the sceptic? Why do they so readily speak great swelling words of vanity against serious religion, and against the things of the truth of God? Because they don't read the Bible, because they have not been taught properly to read it whilst yet they were young. O ye Christian mothers, for God's sake and your own, care for the souls of your children: teach them while yet young to read the Bible; make it the book of daily conversation with them, they can read no book so much to their interest as the Bible; with a mother's wise instructions, suitable comments, and brief but excellent explanations, the child will get to love the Bible. And let me tell you young man, whomsoever you are (if I have such a youth here) who once did love the Bible, but has since lost all love for it, you are a poor unhappy youth; if you knew your own happiness and interest you would still read the Bible; and if you do not read it, before long you will suffer for your neglect of the reading of it. Thus, then we see, the Bible is the sword in the hands of the Christian with which he should go forth to meet error and heresy; they should go and meet popery, superstition, and idolatry, with the Word of God.

Now, Christian people, we call upon you to bless God's holy name, that these sacred books are put into your hands. My time is gone, though there are many things I should have been delighted to remark on this subject, but I will close with two brief remarks.

The first is this: *He is no Christian who, having a Bible, does not use it, and love it, and seek to obey its injunctions.* If this is true, mark, I unchristianize many of you this day before God! You have got Bibles, but you know you don't love them; you know you don't use them; you know you don't seek to conform yourselves to what they teach: then mark you this, you are not Christians. Would to God you were inclined to read it, and obey it. Your kindness to us will not serve you at the last day; your decent and respectable conduct in the house of God will not serve you at that last day; your sitting in the house of God with friends and relatives who truly serve God, will not serve you at that last day. No; if you have got a Bible, yet do not love it, nor read it, nor care for it, you have no interest in the kingdom of heaven. O

it is a cutting thing to a minister to unchristianize any of his flock, and I would not speak in this way of any of you if I did not love your souls. What is life? How soon will it be gone! Why do we press these things upon you, but that you may each see your own character, and judge yourselves, that ye be not judged of God?

One word more, and it is this: *He is but half a Christian, if, indeed, he even be that, who, having the Bible, is not anxious to teach others the truths contained in it, and who does not wish that others should walk in that way to heaven in which he is walking.* The way to heaven is a very narrow one; but it is not so narrow as to prevent more than one going together in that blessed road. He then, I say, who, having a Bible, has no wish nor desire to bring the world around him to love that book that he says he loves, there is great reason to fear whether he really loves it.

Come, then, think, beloved brethren, what are you doing? Time is short, and death is near. Three centuries, mark, have passed away since the English Bible first appeared complete! How many of our British fellow-subjects are there who have as yet never read it? How many are there in this great city who have never read it? How many hundred millions in different parts of the British possessions are there who have never seen it? Go, then, try what you can do; exert yourselves; be up and doing. I had intended to have had this day a collection; shall I tell you why I had it not? I will: it is not to your disgrace, but to your credit. Your liberal offerings this day fortnight, when you gave us 96*l.* 6*s.* 6*d.*, made me determine that you should not be applied to again so soon. I felt your Christian liberality; but though we have no collection now, in God's name let me set you all to work. Go you, and see what you can do in your family. Let every master of a house this day, or the mistress of the family, perhaps, is the most proper person, inquire whether their servants have got Bibles; and if there be a poor servant girl that waits upon you in any family attending this church that has not a Bible, take care she has one before this day week. Then inquire and think, have you any poor relations that have not got one, any poor friend or neighbour that has not got one. Then ask again, are your own children unprovided; are they being led away by infidelity on the one hand, or popery on the other. O that there was more family catechizing, more family conversation about the Bible! Come, go to work, and try and do what you can; yet a little while and death will overtake us all. Be up and doing; work while it is called to-day, for the night cometh wherein no man can work. And if you do this then I am not afraid of the mighty struggle that is coming, and coming fast. If the powers of light and darkness are brought into collision, I am not afraid of the consequences, "Great is the truth, and it must prevail." "The sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God," shall never be used in vain. God give us, as Protestant churches, to endeavour to do our duty, and then God Almighty blast all the designs of the pope and the devil, and all the enemies of God's word.

DEFENCE OF THE SEPARATION OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND FROM  
THE CHURCH OF ROME.

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REV. H. MELVILL, A.M.

CAMDEN CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, OCTOBER 4, 1835.

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\* If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men."—ROMANS, xii. 18.

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IN one of those touching addresses which Christ delivered to his disciples, shortly before his crucifixion, he bequeathed them, as you may remember, the legacy of peace : " Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you." It is observable, that the peace thus left us by Christ is emphatically *his* peace : " *My* peace I give unto you." And accordingly we have a petition in our Litany, " O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world, grant us *thy* peace." Though bearing the title of " the Prince of peace," we know that Christ said in regard of himself, " Think not that I am come to send peace on earth : I am not come to send peace, but a sword." Hence it may be inferred, that the peace which may be called " Christ's peace," that which Christ bequeathed, and for which we pray, is not a peace which is necessarily to banish all divisions, but which is rather to subsist in the midst of divisions. The peace which Christ enjoyed as the founder of Christianity, and which he may be regarded as intending, when speaking of *his* peace, resulted from the consciousness that he was doing the will of God, and promoting the good of man. It was an internal peace rather than an external ; for without were wars and fightings, the opposition of avowed enemies, and the coldness and suspicion of friends. His peace, therefore, was not peace with those around : there was charity, full and fervent charity, towards those who were the most vehement in their enmity ; but there was, at the same time, the most unflinching exposure of their faults, and the determined withstandng of their practices. We may safely declare of Christ, that he never purchased peace by any thing like compromise : though his heart was overflowing with love towards the whole human race, he shewed no leniency towards their sins, but, on the contrary, was too much their friend to be any thing but the stern reprobation of their vices. He had peace of conscience rather than peace of condition : he, indeed, desired both, and laboured for both ; but since he lived in the midst of a sinful and perverse generation, he could not be at peace with mankind, save by leaving them unrebuked, and this would have been to purchase quiet by neglecting duty. Hence the legacy of peace which Christ bequeathed his Church may be fully enjoyed, and yet that Church have no concord with the great mass of men. It may even be bound on a Church to do much by which, to all appearance, divisions would be fomented ; for if she would imitate Christ, and thus enjoy his peace, she must be bold in denouncing

every error, and never think that true brotherhood can be maintained by commanding principle. It is unquestionably her business to "follow after the things that make for peace;" but to take care, lest in her eagerness to promote this object, she surrender truth, and ward off separation by unwarrantable ~~sacrifices~~.

Now the words of our text may be said to recommend that peace, which may thus be regarded as bequeathed us by Christ. The Apostle enjoins as a duty, that we strive to live peaceably with all; but plainly intimates that it would be difficult, or rather impossible. He introduces two restrictive clauses: "if it be possible," and "as much as lieth in you:" the latter implying, that there were cases in which it was the Christian's own fault if union did not subsist; but the former that no amount of diligence and care could ensure the universal harmony. It would seem from the context of the verse, that St. Paul is not so much referring to the schisms in the visible Church, as to differences and quarrels between man and man. But the rule for deciding and for the guidance of Christians in their individual, must be equally applicable in their collective capacity. If it be the duty of every member of the Church, so far as in him lieth, to live peaceably with all men, it must be the duty of the Church as a body to do all in her power to promote union and prevent schism. In each case, therefore, there must be a point at which separation becomes unavoidable: and therefore are the words "if it be possible," prefixed to the precept. In the instance of the *individual*, the conduct of others may be so injurious, that with every disposition to concede, and the greatest patience under wrong, it may be absolutely necessary to shun all intercourse, and even to adopt measures for self-defence. In the instance of the *Church*, the tenets of some of her professed members may be so inconsistent with truth, or their practice so opposed to the Gospel, that to retain them in her communion would be faithlessness to her Maker. Or again, the Church in her collective capacity may grievously depart from the faith once delivered to the saints; she may introduce unsound doctrines or superstitious observances; and thus may it be the duty of those of her members, who are still zealous for the truth as it is in Jesus, to protest firmly against the abomination, and at length to break off their union with that Church, if she will not put from her the falsehood and the idolatry. The main thing to be borne in mind, as we have already intimated, is, that peace is too dearly purchased, if purchased by the least surrender of principle; that unity deserves not the name which is purchased by the resolution to avoid all differences in opinion by mutual concession. On points which are not fundamental, much may be done by mutual concession; and those will have a heavy weight of guilt to account for, who have torn and divided the visible Church, when the matter in debate has been one of mere ceremony, or, at least, one which involves nothing of indispensable truth. We doubt whether the mass of those, who in modern days have introduced sects and divisions among Christians, can prove, in vindication of their conduct, that they had obeyed implicitly the direction of the Apostle, "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." It might be hard to shew, if the ground of separation were rigidly examined, that the impossible point had been reached, the point at which, if union had been preserved, fundamental truth would have been compromised. It should then only be impossible for a Christian to live peaceably, when to avoid schism he must tolerate fatal error. And if separatists cannot make

good their separation on this simple principle, their failing to live peaceably is not to be sheltered by the first clause of our text ; they must rather vindicate themselves by the second, “ as much as lieth in you :” then there is a question which none but God can decide, How far the infirmity which caused unnecessary division was sinful, and how far unavoidable.

But whatever may be determined with regard to this or that particular case of infraction, the general rule already stated, is manifestly correct, that whatever is not fundamental should be given up for the sake of peace ; but that there must be more than separation if, in maintaining peace, we have to compromise truth. We must admit, indeed, that there will be difficulty in applying this rule ; for since the Bible no where divides doctrines into those which are fundamental and those which are not, there may be difference of opinion as to the class to which a certain truth may belong, and therefore also doubt whether it should be enforced at the risk of separation. But if Scripture has not made a division of truths, there are some which manifestly constitute the very essence of Christianity ; whilst others, though full of importance and instruction, are manifestly subordinate, and fill a lower place in the Christian economy. There are points on which differences of opinion may be permitted, and others on which unanimity is indispensable. There can, for example, be no sufficient reason for breaking the bond of peace in the matter of predestination ; the members of a church may remain in perfect harmony, though some hold and some do not the doctrine of election. But if the debated point be the divinity of Christ, or the impossibility of justification except through his merits, there must be unanimity at whatever cost. Christianity is nothing if these points be denied, and therefore must the Christian Church, if it would not forfeit its character, separate boldly from all those by whom they are rejected.

Now it would be easy and natural to enlarge on the principle of our text when thus applied to the maintenance of peace in Christ’s visible Church ; and it might justly be expected from us, under ordinary circumstances, that we should examine in greater detail and with more precision, where the point lies at which peace can be preserved only by compromising principle. But many, if not all of you, are aware, that this day is the anniversary of an event of the greatest moment to the Church of Christ in these realms, and you will have conjectured that I have selected the text and made the foregoing remarks with distinct reference to such an event. There have, indeed, been no directions given to the officiating ministers of the Church that the event in question should be commemorated by them in their public discourses ; but as each is left unshackled in this matter, I for one feel but too deeply how Popery is labouring to gain an ascendancy in our land, to neglect an opportunity of reminding you of your privileges, and warning you against the man of sin. I cannot put away the persuasion, that there has been among Protestants a growing ignorance and indifference with regard to the points in dispute between the Reformed Church and the Papal, and a strengthening opinion that the two Churches after all differ in little that is vital. And this degeneracy of Protestantism has given encouragement to Popery, so that the false system against which our forefathers rose manfully up, and in the expulsion of which they perilled substance and life, has been putting forth tokens of strength and expansion, profiting by the apathy of those most bound to withstand it, and procuring itself the aids of a timid legislation. With such views in regard to

the present state of Popery, I could not feel justified in omitting an opportunity of addressing you as Protestants.

On this very day of the year, three centuries ago—on the fourth of October, 1535—was finished the printing of the first translation of the whole Bible which ever appeared in English. This translation is ordinarily known under the name of Coverdale's Bible ; Miles Coverdale, afterwards Bishop of Exeter, having superintended the whole, and himself translated many parts. Wickliffe, justly styled, “The Morning Star of the Reformation,” had laboured to render the Scriptures accessible to his countrymen ; and before Cranmer prevailed on Henry the Eighth to order a translation, an English version of the New Testament was published by Tyndal : but Coverdale's was the first entire English version of the Bible, and the first version that was allowed by royal authority : so that we may fairly say, that on this very day three hundred years back, the Scriptures of God were first given to the English in their native tongue. Who will say, that this event is not deserving of commemoration ? The publication of the Bible under royal authority was tantamount to a proclamation that all men had a right to read God's word for themselves, and was therefore the national renunciation of that worst tenet of Popery, which forbids to the common people the perusal of Scripture. Hence there is great justice in regarding the day on which the Bible was first published as the day on which the Reformation was effected in England. We need not remind you that the Reformation was a long and laborious work, carried on through a series of years, and with many interruptions. It might be difficult to fix the precise time at which the Reformation in this country began, or at which it could be pronounced complete. A sense of the corruption and tyranny of the Roman church had been so long gaining ground before openly manifested, and afterwards the advances towards a moral emancipation were so gradual and so often checked, that if you wish to commemorate the Reformation you can hardly determine where the anniversary should fall. Hence the necessity of fixing on some great leading event, whose importance should be such as to warrant our regarding it as constituting the Reformation. In Germany, for example, the Protestants make this use of Martin Luther's first publication against papal indulgences, regarding that publication as the first blow struck at the Catholic usurpation, and therefore date from it as the commencement of the Reformation in their country. It might indeed be possible to fix on some similar event in our own country ; but none can be more appropriate, because with none is the Reformation more connected, than the first publication of the entire English Bible. We are quite, therefore, of opinion with those who would regard this day as the third centenary of the Reformation in England. We would reckon that on this day three hundred years back was Popery rejected and Protestantism established in this country. And if we be warranted in considering that we are this day completing the third centenary of the life of the Reformed Church in these realms, there must be a special appropriateness in addressing you on points connected with the Reformation, if, as we fear, there is a sickliness and spuriousness in modern Protestantism which encourages the hopes and seconds the efforts of the agents of Popery.

Now we have selected our text in preference to many that might seem more appropriate, because we consider that every point on which it is important that

your minds should be informed, is wound up with the question, Can we, as disciples of Christ, live peaceably with Rome? "If it be possible," saith the Apostle, "as much as in you lieth live peaceably with all men." Apply this rule to a church, and then, as we have shewn you, it undoubtedly demands of you that there be nothing of schism or separation so long as principles are not sacrificed for the sake of keeping peace. It warrants us in nothing that can be called a rending of the visible Church, if we cannot prove that we have reached the point at which union is no longer possible, at which, if union is preserved, it must be at the expense of conscience, and with mortal injury to truth. Therefore our text requires us, if we would vindicate any separation (such for instance as that of the English church from the Roman), to prove by the most rigid demonstration that separation has become absolutely a duty, and that if it had been avoided to preserve peace, there would have been a surrender of the principles of the Gospel of Christ. Thus we are driven to examine the reasons which led our forefathers to break off communion with the Roman Catholic church, as well as those by which we justify our refusal to give that church the right hand of fellowship. We need hardly observe that these reasons cannot be explained save by a statement of the doctrines of Popery as contrasted with those of Protestantism: so that in proving that the precept of our text was not disobeyed at the Reformation, we shall remind you of those great points of difference which still separate the churches.

It is a common accusation against us that we were guilty of schism at the Reformation, and that we are chargeable with this guilt until we return into the bosom of the Roman Catholic church. But we throw back the accusation as a most unfounded calumny, and we deny that the name of *schism* can in any sense be fastened on our separation, declaring that we had no choice but to make this separation, or surrender Christianity. It is this denial and this declaration which we shall endeavour to make good, shewing you very briefly, in the first place, *That the English Church was not guilty of schism at the Reformation*; and more at length, in the second place, *That the separation was demanded and is still justified by the corruptions of Rome*.

Now, it is one of the great doctrines of Popery, as you must all be aware, that the Pope, who is the Bishop of the Romish church, is the head also of the universal Church of Christ, so that he is vested with supreme authority over all bishops and pastors in every section of this earth. This pretended supremacy of the Pope we utterly reject, declaring that it can find no syllable of vindication in the Bible, and maintaining it to be nothing but an insolent assumption, of which no trace can be found in the first ages of Christianity. The Bible no where hints that there was to be such an universal head of the Church as the Pope professes to be; and ages elapsed before the bishops of Rome discovered that, as St. Peter's successors, they had a right to this unlimited lordship. We contend, therefore, against the doctrine of papal supremacy, as utterly unsanctioned either by Scripture or antiquity, and maintain that the Pope could have had no power, except by usurpation, over the branch of Christ's Church established in this land. He indeed claimed the power, and during the long night of ignorance that power was conceded: but we utterly deny that he had right to any power, because we deny that as Bishop of Rome he was vested with authority over other parts of Christ's Church. Whatever his

sway in his own district, England, we contend, was no part of that district; and if England in its ignorance had given him power, England when better taught did but justly in withdrawing that power; so that there is nothing which with a shew of justice could be called *schism*, in the separation of the English church from the Roman. There would indeed have been schism had the doctrine of the Roman Catholics been true, that the Pope is the universal head of the Church; for then would the Reformers have withdrawn an allegiance which it was their duty to yield, and have detached themselves from the visible body of Christ: but on no other supposition can the charge be established. Popery must be true, and the Bishop of Rome must be shewn to be head of the whole Christian Church, otherwise there can be nothing of schism in England refusing to own any longer the authority of the Pope, and re-establishing the supremacy of her king in all causes ecclesiastical and civil: and we need not say that we are not much troubled with the accusation of schism so long as it cannot be made good till Popery be proved true. It is somewhat too bold an accusation to call us schismatics, when the name takes for granted what is not the case, that the Roman Catholic church includes the whole visible Church. The charge will come with a good grace when the supremacy of the Pope is incontrovertibly established; but it falls like the idle ebullition of impotent malice while that supremacy rests on nothing but the ignorance and the credulity of the dark middle ages.

And we wish you to observe, that there were no spiritual ties which necessarily bound together England and Rome. We are not indebted to Rome for our Christianity. Whatever may be thought of the opinion, which has been supported by vast learning and ability, that St. Paul himself preached the Gospel in Britain, and ordained a bishop here before there was any in Rome, so that the Anglican church is older than the Roman; it is at least certain that Christianity made its way into these islands at a very early period; and that when the missionaries of Rome first visited our shores they found a Christian Church already established, a Church whose bishop refused submission to the Pope, although in process of time that submission was yielded. On what principle, then, is it to be maintained that the English church was so integral a part of the Roman that there could be no separation without schism? The English church had been independently governed by its own officers, having no connexion, but that of a common brotherhood, with other parts of Christ's visible body. Rome came down upon it in subtlety and pride, put forward its arrogant claims, and asked to be received as supreme in every ecclesiastical cause. The times were those in which moral and mental darkness were fast pervading the earth, and which therefore favoured the bold pretensions of an ambitious and unprincipled pontiff: and no marvel that England yielded with the rest of Christendom; so that a church founded in apostolic days, owing no allegiance to any foreign power, joined in the false, but almost universal confession, that the Pope was the vicegerent of Christ, endowed with unbounded authority over every ecclesiastical section. But at length God mercifully interposed, and raised up men with power and disposition to examine for themselves, and with intrepidity to proclaim the result of their searchings. In one country after another of Europe stood forth those who had prayerfully studied the Bible, and who were too zealous for the truth, too warm lovers both of God and man to keep silent on a usurpation which they found not

**sanctioned by Scripture.** And England was not without her worthies and her champions in this great struggle : there were those amongst her sons who felt that she crouched beneath a yoke that God had not ordained, and who therefore summoned her to rise and re-assert her independence ; and when she hearkened to the call, and rose up in a majesty and a strength which still command our wonder, and shook off the yoke of papal oppression, declaring that the Roman pontiff had no authority within her coasts, what did she do but resume a power which ought never to have been delegated, and deny a claim which ought never to have been acknowledged ? In a season of ignorance, when all Europe bent to the spiritual tyrant, she had made herself subject to the Roman see ; and, therefore, when she joined other lands in daring to be free, she did nothing but take what was inalienably her own, what she had parted with in blindness, but which all the while could not be lawfully surrendered. We admit then nothing in her separation from the Romish church which approximates to schism. She had committed a grievous error in acknowledging the Pope's supremacy, but there could be nothing like schism in denying that supremacy ; and there may be employed all the resources of casuistry on this matter by the partisans of Rome, labouring to brand the reformers as schismatics ; but until it can be proved by Scripture (for away with all traditions and legends !) that there is no true church but the Roman and that the head of this church has been ordained of God to be supreme throughout Christendom in every ecclesiastical matter, it never can be proved that our fathers in the sixteenth century would have been justified in continuing allegiance to the Pope ; nor therefore, that, in transferring that allegiance to their own anointed king, they were unmindful of the precept, “ If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.”

Now we have endeavoured to state this fact under the most simple point of view, because it is easy to involve it in seeming perplexity. The act by which we separated from the church of Rome, and by which, therefore, if at all, we are held guilty of schism, was the act by which we deny the Pope had any authority in this kingdom. It was not, strictly speaking, by our denouncing image worship, by our denying transubstantiation, by our rejecting the mediation of angels and saints, that we ceased to be a part of the Roman church : that which made us a part of the church was acknowledging the Pope as the ecclesiastical head ; and that which dissolved our union with that church was the refusing to continue that acknowledgment. Had the Roman church been free from the corruptions to which we have referred, holding no erroneous doctrine but that of papal supremacy, separation would still have been a duty : there would still have been the usurpation of our monarchical power by the Pope, and it could not have been schism to restore that power to its right owner.

But now, waiving the question of schism, we have to examine, in the second place, **THE CHIEF POINTS OF DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE REFORMED CHURCH AND THE ROMAN** ; that so you may be reminded of the grounds of separation and the reasons of Protestants refusing peace with Papists.

We formally separated from Rome, as we have just explained, by refusing to acknowledge the supremacy of the Pope : but it was chiefly by rejecting certain doctrines and observances, and by standing up for truth in opposition to error, that we became emphatically a Reformed Church, and gained the honourable

title of "*Protestants.*" We do not deny (and this we must state clearly before entering on the errors of Rome), that the Roman Catholic Church is a true and apostolic church, her bishops and priests deriving their authority in an unbroken line from Christ and his apostles. Accordingly, if a Roman Catholic priest renounces what we call the errors of Popery, our church immediately receives him as one of her ministers, requiring no fresh ordination before she allows him to officiate at her altars. And if his ordination be not in every sense valid, neither is ours; for if we have derived our ordination from the apostles, it has been through the channel of the Roman Catholic church. So that to deny the transmission of the authority in the popish priesthood since the Reformation, would be to deny it before; and thus we should be left without any ordination which could be traced back to the apostles. There is no question, then, on the principles of an episcopal church, that the Roman Catholic is a true branch of Christ's church, however grievously corrupt and fearfully deformed. It is a true church, inasmuch as its ministers have been duly invested with authority to preach the Word and dispense the sacraments; and it is a true church moreover, inasmuch as it has never ceased to hold the Head, which is Christ, and to acknowledge the fundamental truth of our religion, that Jesus, God as well as man, died as the propitiation for the sins of the world. And we certainly are not of those who would say, that there can be no salvation for the members of such a church: we can quite believe of many Roman Catholics, that they cling to the fundamental truth which has just been stated; having but little of the corruptions of that church, or not so holding false doctrine as to allow it to interfere with the grand truth of Christianity. But, then, we are bound to add, that if these men be good Christians, they are bad Roman Catholics; practically, though unconsciously, they are Protestants in the midst of Popery; and whilst they pity us, as having separated from the only true church, there needs nothing but the probings of the Inquisition to fasten on themselves the accusation of heresy, or (more fatal result) to teach them to receive doctrines into their creed which must fearfully endanger their final salvation. For, without assuming the office of a judge, and simply applying the unerring principles of God's Word, we are bold to say, that if a man go all lengths with the tenets of popery, holding the doctrines of Rome as set forth in their authorized documents, we cannot see how that man can be saved. We contend that these doctrines and tenets are so opposed to Christianity, that the receiving them in their full extent is virtually rejecting Christ's gospel. Again, do we say, we presume not to judge our fellow-men, or decide on their condition; but we also say, that we know not on the principles of the Bible, how the being safe for eternity can consist with admitting the whole system of Popery; and on this account, because regarding the errors of Rome as fatal to a man's soul, did our reformers gird themselves to the work of purifying the church; and on the same account do we ourselves, though not unmindful of the precept in the text, declare that it is impossible to make peace with Popery.

It is here that we reach the gist of the question, and that we must set before you certain doctrines held by the Roman church and denounced by the reformers, or state some particulars in which the two differ with regard to the same articles of faith.

We have referred already to *the pretended infallibility of the Romish church,*

and we shall now further say, that Rome must give up this doctrine ere there can be peace. It has no foundation in *Scripture*, for St. Paul addresses the Romish church as liable to err: and it is contradicted by *facts*; for different popes and councils have decreed opposite things: and it is dangerous and deadly, as giving the divine sanction to every error which an ignorant mortal may adopt, and every practice which a bishop may enjoin.

We protest next against the *Romish doctrine of justification*, declaring it unscriptural, and therefore fatal to the soul. This doctrine is, that our own inherent justice is the formal cause of our justification; the Council of Trent having declared any one accursed who shall say, that men are justified either by the imputation of Christ's righteousness alone, or only by the remission of sins; or who shall declare that the grace by which we are justified is of the favour of God alone. And as to *merit*, which is closely associated herewith, the most enlightened cardinal and writer of the Romish church has decided, that a just man hath, by a double title, right to the same glory—one by the merits of Christ imparted to him by grace, another by his own merits. Can we, without treachery to the souls of men, be at peace with Rome whilst she inculcates tenets directly at variance with those which are the very life's-blood of Christianity, that we are justified *freely* by God's grace *through faith*, and *not of works*; and that the *gift* of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord?

We protest further against the *Romish doctrine of the insufficiency of what we receive as the canonical Scriptures, and of the authority of the Apocrypha and tradition*. The papists hold that there is not expressly contained in Scripture all necessary doctrines either concerning faith or manners. We reject the tenet as blasphemous, seeing that a curse is pronounced in the Bible on all who shall add to it, or take from it: and thus God the Spirit hath decided the sufficiency of the Scriptures. The papists receive the Apocryphal books as canonical. The voice of antiquity is against them; the internal evidence is against them: and we protest against their reception, because we know that the Apocryphal books may be brought in support of doctrines which we repudiate as false, and of practices which we deprecate as impious. And as to traditions, which the Council of Trent decreed that they must be received with no less piety and veneration than the Scriptures, they may be mighty convenient for papists, because tradition can be produced with authority and veneration whenever a falsehood is to be made current for truth: but we utterly reject these unwritten traditions, because at best they are impeachments of the sufficiency of the Scriptures, and because they afford every facility for the establishment of error under the seeming sanction of God.

And this is not all: our protest extends itself on the right-hand and on the left. The Papists maintain, that in the sacrament of the Lord's supper there is a conversion of the whole substance of the bread into Christ's body, and the whole substance of the wine into his blood. This is their *doctrine of transubstantiation*. Against this doctrine we protest, not only because it is a contradiction to our senses—the taste, and touch, and sight assure us that the consecrated bread is still bread, and the consecrated wine is still wine—but because it overthrows the truth of Christ's humanity; it makes his body omnipresent; it makes his body to be on earth while Scripture declares it to be in heaven. And if it thus interfere with Christ's humanity, affecting vitally

the truth of his being a man like ourselves, how can we admit it without destroying the gospel?

Papists further hold, in regard to the Lord's supper, *that therein is offered a true, proper, and propitiatory sacrifice for the living and the dead*, so that the priest daily ministering makes a fresh oblation of the Son of God to the Father. This is what is styled, "the sacrifice of the mass." We reject it as unscriptural, for we know that "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many," and we reject it as impious, because Christ, as the great High Priest, offered up himself, and no inferior priest could present so illustrious a victim.

Neither is it in this error only that the Papists interfere with the mediatorial office of Christ. What is to be said of the *invocation of angels and saints*? The Romish church declares that the saints, who reign with Christ, are to be venerated and invoked, and that they offer up prayers to God for us. Nay, has not the present Pope, in a letter circulated among the clergy of his church, styled the Virgin Mary "his greatest confidence," even "the whole foundation of his hope?" Shall we not protest against a church, and that too vehemently—shall we make peace with a church which thus (disguise it how you will) exalts sinful mortals to a participation in the great office of Jesus, introducing virtually a long train of intercessors, and thus diminishing the mighty and life-giving truths, that "there is one Mediator between God and man;" and that "if any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous?"

We must go farther: we must not hesitate to charge the Roman church with *idolatry*: though many, who have often sworn solemnly to their belief that its practices were idolatrous, now hold such an opinion to be the offspring of nothing but ignorance and illiberality. The Council of Trent decreed that "the images and reliques of Christ and the saints are to be duly honoured, venerated, and worshipped;" and no one who has visited Roman Catholic countries can be ignorant how faithfully this decree is obeyed. We call this *idolatry* "O, no," is the retort; "the worship is not rendered to the image, but only to the Being represented." Be it so; this is, nevertheless, idolatry. The Israelites, when they bowed before the golden calf, professedly designed to worship the true God, and not the image; but they were slain with a great slaughter as impious idolaters. Besides, this is a mere subterfuge. The image is worshipped, else why has one image greater sanctity than another? Why are pilgrimages to be made to "our Lady's Chapel at Loretto" rather than to any other chapel of "our Lady," except that the Virgin's image in the one place is more precious than in another? And if thus it be thought that there is virtue resident in the image, what use is there in saying that the image is nothing? The second commandment is broken, distinctly and flagrantly broken, by the Roman Catholics; and as worshippers of the one true God, who has declared himself a "jealous God," we protest against a church which enjoins that incense be burnt and prayers made before images; and we demand of her that she sweep from her temples the silver and the gold, the wood and the stone, the work of men's hands, ere there can be place for our obeying the precept of Paul, "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men."

What shall we say more? For the time would fail us to tell of multiplied sacraments; of the cup denied to the laity, though Christ said to his disciples, "Drink ye all of it;" of indulgences and impiously-imagined deceits, whereby

men may be delivered from purgatory, a place which exists only in their own crude fancies ; of the distinction between venial sins and mortal—fine wire-drawn subtleties contrary to the Scripture declarations of sin, and calculated to lull men's consciences to sleep in the midst of their crimes ; of penances which are meritorious, and reliques which are miraculous ; of the shutting up the Bible from the common people ; of prayers in an unknown tongue ; of fastings which have no authority in revelation ; and of prohibitions which necessarily lead to licentiousness. We will not say, that in each of these particulars, so rapidly enumerated, there is the same degree of error, or that the error is equally fundamental ; but we can confidently affirm, that in each case there is cause for the protest of every lover of Christianity, and that in none can the error be deemed harmless ; yea, in none can it be shown other than full of peril to the soul. And whatever your opinion on one or another point of difference between the churches, we may safely put it to every upholder of scriptural doctrine to decide, whether the catalogue we have given of Roman Catholic errors and corruptions does not justify the Reformers in having commenced, and ourselves in continuing separate from, the plague of Popery. We have shown you doctrines completely contrary to that of justification by faith, which ascribes a strength to man's power, and a worth to his actions, which would almost prove that he himself might be the author of his salvation. We have brought before you tenets not to be reconciled with the truth of the Redeemer's complex person, and which assail his office as Mediator, and strip his propitiation of power by representing it as daily repeated. We have told you of violation done to the sanctity of revelation by the honour given to human fables and traditions ; of idolatrous worship ; of extenuated sin ; and of authority impiously assumed to remit punishments and dispense the rewards of futurity. And this is Popery ; this is Popery, not as libelled, and maligned, and traduced by sworn foes ; but as described and defined in their own authorized and unrescinded documents. This is Popery, the religion against which modern liberalism will tell you it is little better than bigotry to object, and which approaches so nearly to Protestantism, that a little mutual accommodation might remove every difference. Yes, it may approach nearly to Protestantism, but only to Protestantism when thrice distilled in the alembic of heartless indifference, and with the fire of infidelity—not the Protestantism of Luther, and Cranmer, and Wickliffe, and Hooper, and all the glorious company of martyrs—not the Protestantism of the worthies of the purest days of Christianity—not the Protestantism of the holy fathers of the Church—not the Protestantism (we are bold to use the expression) not the Protestantism of Christ and his apostles. Yes, the Protestantism for which we contend, and of which we declare, that it is just as incapable of an alliance with Popery, as the east is of junction with the west, is the Protestantism of Christ and his apostles. The reformed religion is no novelty ; if it can be proved a day younger than Christ and his apostles, away with it from the earth as a pernicious delusion. It was no invention of Luther and his fellow-labourers. The Roman Catholics, indeed, would taunt us with the recent origin of our faith, as though it sprung up in the sixteenth century, while their own is hallowed by all the sanctions of antiquity. There never was a more insolent taunt, and never a more unwarranted boast. *Ours* is the old religion ; *theirs* is the new. *Ours* is at least as old as the Bible ; it has not a single tenet which we do not prove from the

Bible. But *theirs* must be younger than the Bible : for where in the Bible is the Bible said to be insufficient ? and where is the Pope declared supreme and infallible ? and where is sin divided into mortal and venial ? and where are the clergy forbidden to marry ? and where are images directed to be worshipped ? and where is the Church entrusted with the granting of indulgences ? There is not a solitary article in Protestantism in support of which we are not ready to appeal to the canonical Scriptures, and the writings of the earliest fathers ; and there are a hundred in Popery which Papists themselves are too wise to rest on such an appeal. They may ask us, “Where was your religion before Luther ?” Our reply is, In the word of the living God ; in the creeds of apostles and apostolic men ; and in the practices of those witnesses who, in every age, refused to participate in the abominations of Rome. But we ask them, Where was your religion before such or such an usurping pontiff put forth such or such a doctrine or claim ? We challenge the documents. We fix the doctrine of the papal supremacy to the sixth century (let them prove it older if they can) ; the seven sacraments to the twelfth century (let them prove them older if they can) ; transubstantiation to the thirteenth century (let them prove it older if they can). And yet Protestantism is the spurious manufacture of a late date, whilst Popery is the venerable transmission from the first year of the Christian era ! Yes, all that is *true* in Popery is a transmission from the earliest days of Christianity : but all that is true in Popery is *Protestantism*. Popery is Protestantism mutilated, disguised, deformed, and overlaid with corrupt traditions ; and Protestantism is Popery restored to its first purity, cleansed from false glosses, and freed from the rubbish accumulated on it in ages of superstition. So that we recur to our former assertion and declare, that the Protestantism for which we contend as irreconcilable with Popery, can be nothing else than the Protestantism of Christ and his apostles, and the Protestantism of Christ and his apostles can have no peace with Popery.

We would, if possible, live peaceably with all men, and therefore with the Church of Rome : but it is not possible. We cannot surrender justification by faith ; we cannot multiply mediators ; we cannot bow down before images ; we cannot believe bread to be flesh, and wine to be blood ; we cannot ascribe to fallible man the unerring wisdom of the one living God ; and therefore it is not possible. No : if popery is to regain its lost power, let it not be through our giving it the right-hand of fellowship. Let it wrest back ecclesiastical endowments, let it kindle the extinguished fires of persecution, let it be legislated into might by time-serving concessions ; but never let us be silent as though we thought Popery to be truth, and never supine as though we reckoned its errors unimportant. A righteous ancestry felt the impossibility of peace with Rome and though they could wage the war only with the surrender of substance and of life, yet did they manfully throw themselves into the struggle ; for far dearer to them was “the truth as it is in Jesus” than wealth, or honour, or the quiet comforts of home. They saw that this truth was disguised or denied and they could not rest till it was fully exhibited and boldly proclaimed. Their ashes are now in our land ; and our cities and villages are honoured by their memories ; but shall it be said, that their spirit hath departed, and that we know not the worth of the privileges purchased for us by their blood ? Children as we are of men who discovered, and acted on the discovery, that to

remain at peace with Rome were to offer an insult to God, we will not prove our degeneracy by lapsing into an alliance which they shunned as sacrilegious. The echo of their voices, trumpet-tongued as they were, so that the piercing call shook Europe as with an earthquake, still lingers on our mountains and in our valleys ; still is it syllabbling to us, that Popery is the predicted apostacy of the latter times—still discoursing of Rome as the mystic Babylon of the Apocalypse, and reiterating the summons, “ Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.” Though if there were no such echo, there is speech enough in reason, speech enough in revelation, to show that in separating from the Romish Church we are not forgetful of the duty of endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace ; but that in refusing communion with that church and requiring her to renounce her abominations, ere we keep back our protest, we obey to the utmost the precept of the Apostle, “ If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.”

Now we intimated, at the early part of our discourse, that we were the more ready to embrace this opportunity of bringing before you Protestantism in contrast with Popery, because we believe that the Roman Catholic religion is rapidly gaining ground in our country. There must be great inattention to what is passing on all sides if any of you be unaware that Popery is on the increase. It is easy to meet statements in regard to the growing number of Papal chapels and colleges by saying, that the growth is only in proportion to the growth of the population, and therefore does not indicate any influx of proselytes. Of course, a reply such as this is of no worth except as it is borne out by facts ; and we thoroughly believe, the more carefully you examine the more you will find there is a growth in Popery far greater than you have a right to expect from the growth in population ; so that when you have made all due allowance for the increased number in Roman Catholic families, there will be a large surplus which can only be referred to a successful system of proselytism. It should be enough to convince you of this, as you may easily observe, that Roman Catholic chapels are rising in neighbourhoods where there is no Roman Catholic population, and that in cases where chapels have been reared in hopes that congregations would be formed, those hopes have not been altogether falsified by the event. It must be admitted that this proves a wonderful, and not unsuccessful, activity on the part of Roman Catholic emissaries ; an activity more than commensurate with the wants of the Roman Catholic population, which must be backed by assistance which it is hard to ascertain, for there is manifestly no want of money, but funds are so liberally supplied as to justify the belief that foreign societies are centering their energies in the great work of overthrowing Protestantism in England. Not, however, that this immense growth of Popery is confined to our own country ; we rather believe it may be traced in most of the kingdoms which embraced the reformed religion. In Holland, for example, where Protestantism has long been thought most firmly seated, Popery is advancing with extraordinary speed. Only within the last year, the Roman Catholics, in one of the principal towns of that country, have erected a new and splendid church, adorning its summit with a massive crucifix, a distinguishing characteristic never before used in Holland, and thus proclaiming (as I have myself heard the Protestant inhabitants remark) that they are fully conscious of increased power and multiplied importance.

What are we say to all this? Men would persuade you that the enlarged intelligence of the times, the diffusion of knowledge, and the spread of liberality, are an ample security against the revival of a system so absurd as Popery. But it is no use opposing theory to fact; Popery is on the increase. Of what avail is it to argue that it cannot grow in the midst of so much light? Besides, there is a strange forgetfulness that Popery, with all its absurdity, is a most convenient religion, and that it is, emphatically, the religion of human nature, seeing that it flatters its pride, tolerates its vices, saves it from all trouble of thinking for itself, and offers heaven without taking away earth. It is idle to tell me that men have grown too knowing to embrace such a religion; they have not grown too knowing to lose their souls; and therefore neither will I believe them too knowing to lose them in the easiest and most beguiling manner.

You are told, moreover (and this is one of the most specious of the deceits through which Popery carries on its work), that the Roman Catholic religion is not what it was; that it takes its complexion from the times; and that the tenets against which Protestants loudly exclaim, and which they vehemently execrate, were once held by Papists, but only in days of barbarism and ignorance, and that they have long fled before the advances of civilization; and very unfair and ungenerous we are told it is, to rake up the absurdities and barbarities of an uninformed and iron age, and to charge them on the creed of men of our own generation, and who reject it as truly as ourselves. Be it so. We are, at all events, dealing with an infallible church; and unless the claim to infallibility be amongst the things given up, we are at a loss to know how this church can so greatly have changed—how, since she never goes wrong, she can renounce what she believed, and condemn what she did. And the church is not suicidal enough to give up her claim to infallibility; but she is sagacious enough to perceive that men are willing to be deceived; that an excess of false charity is blinding them to facts, and that there is abroad among them such an idolatry of what they call *liberality*, that they make it a point of honour to believe good of all evil, and perhaps evil of all good.

Of this pervading temper of the times is the Romish church, marvellously wise in her generation, adroitly availing herself; and so well has she plied men with the specious statement that she is not what she was, that they are rather covering her with apologies for their former bigotry than taking measures to resist her advances. But there is no change in Popery; the system is the same; intrinsically and inherently the same. It may assume different aspects, just to carry different purposes; but this is itself a part of Popery. There is the variable appearance of the chameleon, and the invariable venom of the serpent. Thus in Ireland, where *Dens's Theology* is the recognized text-book of the Roman Catholic clergy, they will tell you, while they have any end to gain, that Popery is an improved, and modernized and humanized thing; whereas, all the while, there is not a monstrous doctrine broached in the barbarism of past times which this text-book does not uphold as necessary to be believed, and not a foul practice devised in the midnight of the world which it does not enjoin as necessary to be done. Make peace, if you will, with Popery; receive it, if you will, into your chambers; enshrine it in your churches; plant it in your hearts; but be ye certain, as certain as that there is a heaven above you, and a God over you, that the Popery thus honoured and embraced is the very Popery that was degraded and loathed by the holiest of your fathers; the very

Popery—the same in corruption, the same in haughtiness, the same in blood thirstiness, the same in intolerance—the very Popery which lorded it over kings, assumed the prerogatives of Deity, crushed human liberty, and slew the saints of God.

O that England might be convinced of this before taught it by fatal experience! It may not yet be too late. She has tampered with Popery, yea, in many respects, she has patronized Popery, giving it by her compromises and concessions a vantage ground which its best wishers could hardly have dared to expect. Nevertheless, it may not yet be too late. Let Protestants only awake to a sense of the worth of their privileges so long enjoyed that they are practically forgotten, and this land may yet remain what for three centuries it has now been, the great witness for scriptural truth, the great centre of scriptural light. There is already a struggle: in Ireland especially, Popery is so wrestling with Protestantism, that there is cause to fear that falsehood will gain the mastery. And we call upon you to view this struggle in its true light. It is not to be regarded as a struggle between rival churches as to which shall obtain the temporal ascendancy; it is not a contest for the possession of tithes, for the right to the mitre, for the claim to the benefice: it is a contest between the Christianity of the New Testament, and the Christianity of human tradition and corrupt fable. It is a contest therefore by whose issue will be decided whether the pure Gospel is to have footing in Ireland, or whether it is to be altogether and irrecoverably banished. You talk of removing the means of Protestant instruction from parishes where the population is almost entirely papal. What is this but to condemn those parishes to a perpetuity of Popery, and to make it a moral certainty that they will never embrace truth? And could this be the duty of a Protestant government—to take measures for insuring that a papal population never should become Protestant? Rather let the lonely spark be nursed though it be as nothing in the vast sphere of darkness, hoping that God may yet allow it to gather strength, and shed light on all around, having at least a witness hereafter that there was no treachery in those whose duty it was to diffuse Christianity.

But we must conclude, though we seem to have left much that is important unsaid. Our counsel to you individually is, that you examine well into the tenets of Protestantism, and thus possess yourselves of the grounds on which it is impossible that we live peaceably with Rome. If you belong to the Reformed Church, acquaint yourselves with the particulars in which the Reformation consisted, that you may be able to give reasons for opposition to Popery, and be well convinced that they are not unimportant points on which Protestants differ from Papists. Let each in his station oppose the march of Popery, oppose it by argument, by counsel, by exhortation, by prayer. "Watch ye; stand fast in the faith; quit you like men; be strong." By the memory of the martyrs, by the ashes of confessors, by the dust of a thousand saints, we conjure you be staunch in supporting your religion. The spirits of departed worthies who witnessed a good confession, and sealed it with their blood, bend down, we may think, from their lofty dwelling, and mark our earnestness in maintaining the faith for which they died. O, if they could hear our voice, should it not tell them that there are yet many in the land emulous of their zeal, and eager to tread in their steps; ready, if there come a season big with calamity, to gird themselves for the defence of Protestantism in its last asylum.

and to uphold in the strength of the living God, that cause which they sustained by labour and cemented by blood? Yes, illustrious immortals! ye died not in vain. Mighty troop! there was lit up at your massacre a fire in these realms which is yet unextinguished, and from father to son has the sacred flame been transmitted; and though in the days of our security this flame may have burnt with a diminished lustre, yet let the watchmen sound the alarm, and many a mountain-top shall be red with the beacon's blaze, and the noble vault of your resting-place grow illumined with the flash. Repose ye in your deep tranquillity, spirits of the martyred dead! We know something of the worth of a pure Gospel, and a free Bible; and we will bind ourselves by the name of Him who liveth and abideth for ever, to strive and preserve unimpaired the privileges bequeathed us, and to impart them in their beauty and their fulness to the whole mass of our population. Protestantism has long enjoyed a season of tranquillity, and its enemies may have mistaken its quietness for its deadness. "As well," to borrow the simile of an illustrious departed statesman on another occasion, "might they have thought a ship finally dismantled when they have seen her laid up in ordinary, sleeping on her shadow with no signs of power. There needs nothing but news of the invader, and presently would this mighty mass, resting to all appearance uselessly on the waters, ruffle bravely her plumage, awaken her dormant thunder, and walk the waves as though instinct with life." Thus Protestantism may have seemed to be slumbering, but she has in herself the elements of might; and let only the tidings be heard that the Philistine is upon her, and again and suddenly shall she spring into energy; and it shall be proved that she has all along been the same, and needed nothing but a season of peril to make her spread her wings, and bear down her foes.

We can add no more. We exhort each in the words of the prophet to be "valiant for the truth;" and thus, God helping, may you cause that the religion which this day three hundred years back was gloriously established in our land, shall be transferred unsullied to posterity, the mightiest safeguard for future generations, as it has been the honour and the blessing of past. Yes, be it ours to shew that the spirit of Protestantism, if it has lain dormant, has not been extinguished; but that there are yet staunch and true hearts in England who hold religion dearer than substance, and who having received from their fathers a charter of faith dyed in the blood of the holiest and the best, would rather dye it afresh, if necessary, in their own heart's blood, **than send it down torn and mutilated to their children.**

## THE WRITTEN WORD OF GOD THE ONLY STANDARD OF TRUTH.

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REV. W. CURLING, A.M.

ST. SAVIOUR'S CHURCH, SOUTHWARK, OCTOBER 4, 1835.

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"To the law and to the testimony : if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."—ISAIAH, viii. 20.

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WE are assembled this day, my friends, according to the announcement which I made on Sunday last, to consider a subject in which, as Protestants holding the pure faith of the reformed religion of this country, you cannot, I think, but be deeply interested. It was on the fourth of October, three centuries ago, that the first entire English version of the Scriptures, translated by Coverdale, afterwards Bishop of Exeter, was printed and published under royal authority: and as it was this work which, more than any thing else, under God, prepared the way for the events which soon followed, events so happily connected with all the civil and religious privileges which we now enjoy, it has been thought a seasonable occasion for reconsidering the principles upon which Protestantism is established, and for reverting in grateful remembrance to that great mercy of our God, which, placing in the hands of our forefathers the Scriptures of truth, saved us their children from the errors of Popery.

Now, before I enter upon the subject of my text, which I have chosen as being very applicable to the great point at issue between us and the Church of Rome, I wish to make three or four preliminary observations.

The first is, that *Popery is unchanged*, and that we have, therefore, just as much reason now for pointing out its evils as formerly. Many persons do not think so. There is much lukewarmness in the present day, much religious indifference. The liberality of the age is carried so far, that it is now deemed uncharitable to speak harshly of Popery; and there is thought to be so little difference between the two religions, that with many Protestants it is, I am grieved to say, no longer a question, whether the one religion be not nearly or quite as good as the other! Alas! my brethren, the sufferings, the deaths of our reformers, those men, who, by the sacrifice of their lives, secured to us all that we have now of civil and religious liberty, are allowed to pass from our memories; and it may be said of them in the language of one of our poets,

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"Their blood is shed,  
In confirmation of the noblest claim,  
The claim to feed upon immortal truth,  
To walk with God, to be divinely free,  
To soar and to anticipate the skies :  
*Yet few remember them!*"

I can easily understand how this has arisen: it is partly owing to the circumstance of Protestant principles having been of late years so little urged upon the attention of the people; and it is also to be attributed, in no small degree to the appearance which Popery has of late years presented to the public eye—an appearance so much more favourable, that persons who do not think, and are not aware of the artifice, are led to believe that the religion of the Papists has undergone a material alteration, and is quite another thing from which it was in the days of the reformers. But I would remind these persons who are so ready to forget what was done by their martyred forefathers, that Popery is a religion that *cannot* change. It can assume a false appearance; it can change its external to suit the circumstances of the times in which it is endeavouring to regain its lost ascendancy: but in all its essential qualities it is precisely the same. Is it not the boast of Roman Catholics that their Church is infallible? And does not this assumed infallibility of the Church necessarily involve the unchangeableness of its principles? Let her change her principles, and her claim to be the true Church ceases for ever.

The second observation I would make, is this, *that the subject to be brought forward to-day, is not a political but a religious one.* True, our civil rights were involved in the question which caused the breach in the days of the reformers, and God forbid we should ever lose sight of what we owe *politically*, as well as religiously to the blessed Reformation: but I wish it to be clearly understood that the ground of separation which our Reformers took, was that Popery taught doctrines, not only not sanctioned by the Scriptures of God, but directly opposed to them. It was for high and holy and heavenly principles, principles connected with God's honour and man's salvation, that those who stood forward to maintain the truth, so manfully contended. It may, indeed be said by those, who care not much whether Popery or Protestantism be the religion of this country, that it was a question of mere politics: but no, my hearers; the grand, the vital question, was one of religion. It was whether God was to reign supreme, without a rival, or whether the Pope was to claim to himself God's attributes, and to take upon himself a portion of God's authority; whether Jesus Christ was to be adored as the only Saviour and the only Intercessor, or whether there was to be added to the merit of His righteousness, the merit of our own good works, and to His intercession the intercession of departed saints; whether the Scriptures of God were to be taken as the *only and sufficient* guide to happiness, or whether there were to be superadded to the Scriptures of God the traditions of men; nay, whether the Scriptures were to be possessed and perused by *all*, or whether they were to be looked upon as belonging exclusively to the Church, and as such were to be kept altogether from the hands of the people. These and such like points were the points of difference between the Church of Rome and the reformers: and it is because we still differ *so essentially on fundamental matters of faith* that we are bound still to protest against, what I may truly call, the God-dishonouring and the soul-destroying doctrines of Popery.

My third remark is, *that the question before us is not one that concerns merely the established Church of England.* We were only a part of the separatists at the time of the Reformation—Sweden, Hungary, Denmark, Prussia, Switzerland, and other continental powers, were illuminated with the same light that broke forth in England. The church of Geneva rejected Popery; the Lu-

theran church in Germany broke away from its yoke ; the Moravian church asserts its independence ; and the Protestant dissenter in this country, who has, since that period, left our pale—on points of discipline, not of doctrine—feels equally interested with ourselves in preserving the truth of God from antichristian error. I suppose that Christians of all denominations are thanking God, on this occasion, for their deliverance from Popery. May the united effort shake the yet remaining fabric of the antichristian power to its base ; and may the determination that will be so generally expressed to-day, to stand by the Scriptures of truth, produce, by God's blessing, a stirring and a thrilling effect upon the minds of the people of this country !

I have one more observation to make, and it is this, that in speaking of Popery, I shall evince *no bitterness of feeling towards Roman Catholics.* I have come to this subject as a Christian, and I shall pursue it as a Christian—I have no hostility of feeling towards another man, however hostile his religion may make him feel towards *me*. I love him as my brother ; and I feel compassion for him, because he is a deluded brother ; and “my heart's desire and prayer to God for him is, that he may be saved.” Do not, then, call it intolerance ; do not charge us with being bigoted, when we speak in strong and severe terms of the religion of the Romanists. It is not against *them* personally, it is against their system, so unscriptural in its nature and so ruinous in its effects, that we would awaken hostility. We wish well to, we would save the one, but we hate, we would destroy the other.

I now proceed to the subject before us ; and may that gracious God, in whose cause we are this day engaged, help us both in preaching and hearing, and fill all our hearts with gratitude for his past mercies, the fruits of which we now so richly enjoy, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

We will first consider the principle laid down in our text. It is, that the Scriptures are to be appealed to as the standard, the *only* standard of truth—“To the law and to the testimony.” Secondly, I will shew you how sadly the Church of Rome, both in doctrine and practice, has departed from this principle. Thirdly, how the acting on this principle, in opposition to the Church of Rome led to the Reformation, and produced those blessed consequences, which we are now reaping the advantage of ; and fourthly, I will try the reformed religion by this Scriptural rule, and prove thereby the soundness of its principles.

The first point to which I solicit your serious and prayerful attention, is the grand principle laid down in the text ; namely, that we are TO TAKE THE SCRIPTURES, the inspired word of “the true and living God,” AS THE ONLY STANDARD OF TRUTH. “To the law and to the testimony” (says the prophet) “if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.”

These words were spoken at a time when the men of Judah were in expectation of an attack from the combined forces of Syria and Israel ; and the prophet Isaiah, who made use of them, warns the good people of the land against going in that season of perplexity, for comfort, and advice, and aid, any quarter but God. The unbelieving Jews would urge them to apply those that “had familiar spirits,” but they were resolutely to hold out against the counsel thus given, and were to settle the matter in dispute between them,

selves and their irreligious brethren, by a reference to the Scriptures, where they would find the path of duty plainly pointed out to them—"To the law and to the testimony:" go to the written word (said the man of God), it is the only way of settling the matter: and if those who oppose you, and wish you, instead of applying to God, to go for advice to the spirits of the dead, refuse to conform to the rule which God has laid down for the direction of their conduct, you may know for certain that it is because they are in a state of spiritual blindness, "they have no light in them." Or the latter part of the text, more correctly rendered, is better understood as conveying a threatening, as foretelling a curse—"They shall have no morning light:" and the sentence paraphrased will then run thus: "If they refuse this appeal to the Scriptures, and will not be guided by what God's word says to them, he will bring upon them darkness and distress; a night of misery shall come upon them, and they shall never have a morning of deliverance, but shall be swallowed up in endless calamities!"

Now here, my brethren, you see the duty of appealing to the Scriptures as the rule of faith and practice, enjoined by the solemn, positive command of God himself, and a most awful curse denounced against those who refuse this appeal to the Scriptures. And what is here said, as to the decisive authority of the written Word of God, is confirmed by very many New Testament passages. How often did Christ himself appeal to the Scriptures—how often tell others to go to the Scriptures. It was this weapon he used when he drove back the tempter in the wilderness. When the Pharisees found fault with his disciples who, in their hunger, had plucked the ears of corn on the Sabbath, he excused their conduct by a reference to *the law*: "Have ye not read what David did and they that were with him?" When the young man came to him, and asked him, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" his answer was, "*What is written in the law? how readest thou?*" Likewise to the Sadducees, who denied the resurrection of the dead—"Ye do err" (he said) "not knowing the Scriptures and the Word of God." In the parable of the rich man, who, being in hell's torments, besought Abraham to send to his thoughtless brethren, yet living upon earth, a messenger from the dead, we have another declaration of our blessed Lord, with regard to the Scriptures as the standard of truth, and we cannot but observe how plainly it speaks for the *sufficiency* of God's written revelation: "They have Moses and the prophets," (Abraham is represented as saying) "let them hear *them*:" and, again, our Lord's direction to "search the Scriptures," clearly proves that the Bible is the book which we must all study as our guide to happiness. As the rule of faith, how admirably the Apostle Paul speaks of the Word of God, when addressing Timothy: "From a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith that is in Christ Jesus." And as the rule of practice also, how strikingly does this same Apostle speak of it: "All Scripture" (he says) "is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

The principle laid down, then, in the text, and in support of which I have brought forward these few out of many Scripture passages, is, that the Word of God, written by "holy men of old," who "spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," is the only standard of truth in the world; the only authority w-

which we can appeal as decisive in all religious controversies, and the only directory by which we can guide our steps safely towards heaven. The Word of God is unchangeable ; it is the same to-day as it was centuries ago ; it " shall stand for ever." You, as Protestants, understand this : you think it right to bow down to the supreme authority of God's Word : you will not add to, you will not take from the Scriptures : you look upon the Bible as the Book of books, a book with which no other written by uninspired men, how good soever it may be, can be brought into comparison : and because God has given it to his creatures as " a light to their feet and a lantern to their path," you claim for yourselves, and your neighbours all over the world, the right of perusing it. This is just the principle of my text.

But now, secondly, see

HOW AWFULLY THE CHURCH OF ROME, which calls itself "the true Church," "the Church of Christ," "the pillar and ground of the truth," HAS DEPARTED FROM THIS PRINCIPLE.

Let us try her by the facts of the case. Let us first hear what she says upon the subject in her published decrees ; those which, embodying the formularies of her faith, and the rules of her practice, are subscribed to by her members, and made binding upon their consciences. At the Council of Trent, where the Pope, bishops, and other ecclesiastics were assembled, in the middle of the sixteenth century, to put into definite form the articles of their Church, it was unanimously decreed, that *traditions* should be received as "*of equal authority with the Scriptures* :" and at the same council it was also agreed to make all the books, *apocryphal* as well as others, "*of equal authority*." The reason of their adding traditions to the Scriptures, is given by Pope Pius IV., in these words : "all saving truth is *not* contained in the Holy Scriptures, but *partly in the Scripture and partly in unwritten traditions* ; which whosoever doth not receive with *like* piety and reverence, as he doth the Scriptures, *is accursed*." And in the same way, the poor Irish children are taught to reverence the commandments of men as of equal authority with the commandments of God ; for in Dr. Doyle's Catechism, published in 1828, I find these questions and answers : "Are there any other commandments besides the ten commandments of God?" Answer : "There are ; the commandments and precepts of the Church." And then, when the question is further asked, "Do the precepts of the Church oblige, under pain of *mortal sin*?" The answer is, "Yes;" "he that will not hear the Church (saith Christ) let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican." The fact is, my hearers, they could not support their heretical tenets without the help of these traditions and the apocrypha : they therefore avoid saying, "To the law and to the testimony ;" but raising another standard, a standard of their own, they virtually reject the Scriptures. We have a remarkable instance of their readiness to set aside the Bible, in order to establish their own opinions, at the Council of Augsburg. It was there that the Protestant confession of faith, drawn up by Melanchthon, was presented to the Emperor. After the reading of it, the Duke of Bavaria, who was on the Popish side, asked Eckius, one of his party, whether he could overthrow the doctrines contained in it, by the *Holy Scripture*. "No, (replied Eckius) we cannot by the *Holy Scriptures*, but we may by the *fathers*."

But to return to the Council of Trent. The Popish ecclesiastics there assembled, made a decree which confined the Bible to the Church, and forbade the laity, except under particular circumstances, to read it; and when they did so, they were not to judge for themselves, but were to receive that interpretation of the Bible which the Church put upon it. I will read to you their fourth rule with reference to this subject. "Since it is manifest by experience, that if the Holy Bibles in the vulgar language are circulated every where without discrimination, *more harm than good* arises, on account of the rashness of men; let the judgment of the bishop or inquisitor be abided by in this particular; so that, after consulting with the parish priest or confessor, they may grant permission, to read translations of the Scriptures made by Catholic authors, to those whom they shall have understood to be able to receive no harm: which faculty let them have in writing. But whosoever shall presume to read these Bibles, or have them in possession without such faculty, shall not be capable of receiving absolution of their sins, unless they have first given up their Bibles to the ordinary!" O what principles are the principles of Popery! The Bible is said by them to do "*more harm than good.*" Then the priest, or some other ecclesiastic is to decide who is fit to read it; and the man who shall presume to read it or keep it in his possession, without the licence of the Church, is declared by this decree, to be guilty of a crime too great to be pardoned! Does not this show you, my hearers, that Popery is a religion, alike hostile to God's word and destructive of man's liberty? Again, in the year 1543, just about the same period, an act of parliament was obtained here in our own country, by the adversaries of translations, in which it was decreed, that "no woman (except noblewomen and gentlewomen, who might read to themselves alone and not to others), nor artificers, apprentices, journeymen serving-men, husbandmen, and labourers, were to read the Bible or New Testament in English, to themselves or to any others, privately or openly, *on pain of one month's imprisonment!*"

And is the Church of Rome altered in her sentiments *now*? People say she is; but, alas! she abides by the decrees of her ancient councils; she is true to her faith as it was settled at Trent. She is unchanged, unchangeable. Let us adduce the proof of it. So late as May, 1825, Pope Leo XII. sent a letter to his clergy, in which, with reference to the Bibles issued by the British and Foreign Bible Society, are these words: "We also, venerable brethren, in conformity with our apostolic duty, exhort you to turn away your flocks by all means from those *poisonous pastures*;" adding, in accordance with the opinion expressed at the Council of Trent, that "*more harm than good*" would arise from their indiscriminate circulation! And it is worthy of notice, as shewing that this same spirit is the spirit of Popery in Ireland, that this bull of the Pope was there received, and sent forth by the bishops among their clergy with this recommendation: "Our holy father recommends to the observance of the faithful, a rule of the congregation of the index, which prohibits the perusal of the Sacred Scriptures in the vulgar tongue, without the sanction of the competent authorities. His Holiness *wisely* remarks, that 'more evil than good is found to result from the indiscriminate perusal of them, on account of the rashness of men;'" and then they add, "*in this sentiment of our head and chief, we fully concur.*" Yes, my friends, Popery in Ireland is as much opposed to the circulation of the Scriptures, as Popery was at Trent three

centuries ago. Popery hates the Bible, because Popery cannot bear the light of the Bible. It would expose her false doctrines, it would make manifest her deeds of darkness. Brought to the Bible, what would become of her *justification by human merit*, her image worship, her invocation of saints, her sacrifice of the mass, her transubstantiation, her pilgrimages, her ceremonial fastings, her prayers for the dead, her prayers in an unknown tongue, her impious doctrine of indulgences, her penances, her purgatory? Popery bears sway whilst the people are kept in ignorance; but when the Book of God gets into their hands, and they read and judge for themselves, the chains of Popery are then thrown off for ever.

I have stated enough, I think, to show how completely at variance the principles of the Church of Rome are with the principles laid down in my text. It is not with them, "to the law and to the testimony," but, to the apocrypha, to the traditions of the fathers, to the decrees of councils, to the commandments of the Church. All this takes precedence of the law of God, all this is appealed to before the divine testimony. The people, too, whose duty and whose right it is to appeal to the Scriptures from the ordinances of men, cannot do so, for they are not allowed to peruse them. Such is Popery in the sixteenth, such in the nineteenth century; and such will it continue to be till the curse denounced in my text against those who will not speak according to God's Word, shall fall upon their heads and sink them in eternal ruin.

Let us now see, thirdly, HOW THE ACTING ON THE PRINCIPLE OF MY TEXT in opposition to the express commands of the Church of Rome, LED TO THE REFORMATION, and produced those blessed consequences which we are now reaping the advantage of.

It is not a little remarkable that the art of printing, about the year 1450, very greatly contributed to the work which followed. It revived the study of classical literature; and thus, the Bible, which even clergymen, and others acquainted with learning, had been very little used to read before, was now studied by them; and it was this that led in the first instance to a discovery that the religion in which their fathers had been brought up could not be proved by the New Testament. The Reformation began in Germany, and the intrepid Luther headed the then small band of the Protestants. He was a monk, and also professor of theology and philosophy in the university of Wittenberg. He was first led to study the Scriptures by the indignation which he felt at the profligate sale of popish indulgences. The indulgence, my hearers, is a pardon of sin granted by the Pope of Rome, out of a treasure of the superabundant merit of Christ and saints which he pretends to have in his hands, to individual members of the church who wish to satisfy God's justice by penitential works: and it has been the practice of the church to sell it for money to those who were willing to purchase it. At the time of Luther this was carried to a most awful extent. Leo X., who was then Pope, wishing to execute some expensive design, determined to raise money for the purpose by a sale of indulgences; and as an inducement to persons to become purchasers, it was publicly announced that their crimes, however enormous they might be, even crimes intended as well as those committed, would be forgiven. Luther was indignant: he could not endure that such a shameful traffic should be carried on to the delusion of his fellow-creatures, and the disgrace of religion;

he therefore resolved to "search the Scriptures," in order to see if the doctrine of indulgences had any support from them. "To the law and to the testimony," said Martin Luther: "I have listened too long to the church, and now I will appeal from the church to the Scriptures." He did so: and the discovery of one error, prompted him to pursue his inquiries, and led him to the detection of more. He then published ninety-five distinct propositions against the church of Rome, accusing her of heresy. He afterwards published, with the assistance of Melanthon, a German version of the New Testament, translated from the original Greek. This was the dawn of the Reformation; this was the first blow given to Antichrist in that part of the world: and it never recovered from the severe effects of it; for history informs us, that the reading of the Bible in their vernacular tongue greatly promoted the Reformation among the Germans, who at once saw, from the perusal of that truth-telling book, the errors of Popery.

Tyndal, a minister of the Romish church, had published in the early days of Henry VIII., an English translation of the New Testament; and though it was immediately prohibited by the Romish priesthood, and very many copies consumed in the flames; though the sellers of it were punished, and Tyndal himself put to death for having sent forth such an injurious book to the world; yet, because the word of our God "shall stand for ever," the reading of it, *aye*, and the burning of it, left an indelible impression on the minds of the people, and prepared them for the ready reception of Coverdale's work, which soon followed. Fox, the author of the "Book of Martyrs," gives us a pleasing account of the effect produced upon the public mind by the appearance of Tyndal's Bible. "Their zeal," he says, "was characterized by their sitting up all night in reading or hearing; also by their expenses and charges in buying the books in English, of whom some gave five marks, some more, some less, for a book; and some gave *a load of hay for a few chapters of St. James, or of St. Paul, in English.*"

I now come to Coverdale's translation. It was the first entire Protestant version of the Scriptures that had ever been printed in the English language: and what made it so important to the interests of the Reformation at that period was, that it was printed and published *under royal authority*. The king of England, a man whose "selfishness and ambition (as one observes) were providentially overruled by promoting the Reformation," had been persuaded by Cranmer and others to disown the authority of the Pope; and having done so, he then gave to all his subjects, without distinction, the full liberty of reading the Scriptures. That was a glorious day for England. There was a time, and that soon after the days of the apostles, when England had a church peculiarly her own, and when the English Bishops, standing independent of any foreign power, had refused to acknowledge the supremacy of the Roman See. But, for centuries, she had now been lying under the dominion of the Papacy, and the light which once shone in her, was completely hidden by the thick dark veil of anti-scriptural impositions. Popery had held her in its iron grasp, and keeping her in ignorance, had retained her as a slave to the power which it exercised over her. But now the chain is broken, and England once more is free. "The entrance of thy word giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple." Permission being given to purchase the Scriptures, the people *read with the greatest possible avidity*: and from that time the spirit of primitive

tive Christianity revived, and all the persecutions that followed in the days of Queen Mary, could not force a submission to Popery. "It was wonderful," says a writer of English history, "to see with what joy this Book of God was received, not only among the more learned sort, and those that were noted for overs of the Reformation, but generally all England over, among all the common people; and with what greediness God's Word was read, and what resort to places where the reading of it was. Every body that could, bought the book, and busily read it, or got others to read it to them, if they could not themselves; and divers more elderly people learned to read on purpose, and even little boys flocked among the rest to hear portions of the holy Scriptures read. One William Maldon mentions, that when the king had allowed the Bible to be set forth to be read in the churches, immediately several poor men in the town of Chelmsford, in Essex, where his father lived and was born, bought the New Testament, and on Sundays sat reading it in the lower end of the church: many would flock about them to hear their readings; and he, among the rest, being then but fifteen years old, came every Sunday to hear the glad tidings of the Gospel. O there is something in the Word of God, my brethren, that commends it at once as a Book of truth, to the conscience and the heart. The written Scriptures are so unlike the sayings of men, that nothing but the most shameless impiety could have led the church of Rome to put them on a level with mere human traditions. I am not surprised that the bishops and lay people who went to the flames, preferred the Bible to their lives. I am only surprised that a church calling itself the church of God, should have burned people for possessing it.

Here, then, you see, my hearers, how an appeal to the Scriptures was the cause of the Reformation. You ought to *love* these Scriptures, you ought to *keep to* these Scriptures, because you owe to their perusal liberty of conscience, together with all your civil and religious privileges. What a day do you now behold, contrasted with what your forefathers saw at the time of the Reformation! England now abounds with Bibles: there is no man so poor that he cannot obtain one; all may read it, from the highest to the lowest; and no power, civil or ecclesiastical, *dare* take the precious treasure from any one of the subjects of King William in this realm. At the time of the Reformation the English Bible stood alone, but now a society, established with the view of giving the Scriptures universal circulation, has translated it into as many as one hundred and fifty other languages, and many millions of Bibles and Testaments have been distributed by its means, during the last thirty-one years, in various parts of the earth. O, how thankful you ought to be for your release from Popery! It is to our religion that we owe, by the blessing of God, our present national prosperity. And what is our religion? Do the Papists ask us the question? We can answer, it is the religion of the Scriptures. This brings us to

Our fourth, and last point of consideration, which is, that THE REFORMED FAITH, BROUGHT TO THE TEST OF THE WORD OF GOD, EXHIBITS THE SOUNDNESS OF ITS PRINCIPLES.

The Church of Rome asks us, with an air of triumph, "Where was your religion before Luther?" We can easily tell them. We can say that, long before Popish usurpation came upon us, and Popish innovation corrupted us,

we held and maintained the truth in its purity. Our Church, formed, like that of Rome, after apostolic model, was marked for very many years by the soundness of its doctrines and the simplicity of its worship. The Reformation has not founded a new Church, it has corrected an old one : and the religion which we now profess is the religion of primitive Christianity. There are our Articles and Homilies, our Confessions of Faith, drawn up by martyred reformers. Let these be compared with the Scriptures of truth: we fear not the scrutiny. We honour God in them; we exalt the Saviour; we renounce human merit; we extol the riches of God's grace. See, in our sixth Article, how the Church of England places herself on the ground of the Scriptures. She says, against the Church of Rome, that "Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation, so that whatever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not required of any man that it should be believed as an article of faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation." She says to all her members, We have pointed you to the only standard of truth; go, then, and carry the doctrines we teach you "to the law and to the testimony;" and if you find that they cannot be proved out of God's own Word, then let them be no longer binding on the conscience—reject them for ever. What can be more tolerant, what more honest than this? If the Church of Rome had always acted so, instead of lying, as she now does, under the withering curse of a God whose name she has blasphemed and whose ordinances she has broken, she would have enjoyed his smile, and being blessed by God, she might have become the blessing of the universe. We can but pity, we can but weep for those that remain within her pale. The word of prophecy assures us that dreadful judgments await her, and the same word says to those who are for making common cause with her, "Come out of her my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues."

Thus have I endeavoured to shew you, that a departure from the pure faith, from "the law and the testimony," is the religion of Roman Catholics, and that a return to the pure faith, "to the law and to the testimony," is the religion of Protestants. And now, my hearers, is this your religion? Then let it be seen, I pray you, that it is something more than a name. It is not simply your protest against Popery that will make you good Protestants. You must have the principles of sound religion in your hearts, and you must carry out those principles into practice. I commend to you the Scriptures: keep them as your invaluable treasure. I commend to you "the faith once delivered to the saints," and I charge it upon you that you preserve it inviolate. Beware of self-righteousness; it is the spirit of Popery. Rely only on the merit of Jesus Christ—it is the spirit of Protestantism. Watch against error, and pray to be guided into all essential truth: and God grant that, keeping close to Him who is "the way, and the truth, and the life," you may at length be brought where you shall join "the noble army of martyrs," and where, with the Church triumphant, you shall ever ascribe unto your Almighty Saviour, the kingdom, and the power, and the glory!"

## THE ERRORS OF THE ROMISH CHURCH.

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REV. J. RUDGE, D.D.

HAWKCHURCH, DORSET, OCTOBER 4, 1835.

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"Search the Scriptures."—JOHN, v. 39.

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It is naturally to have been expected, that, in the course of a long and ~~no~~ inactive professional life, I should have had frequent intercourse and communion with persons of various sects and denominations; and I trust and hope that on no occasion upon which I have holden conversation with them, either on their peculiar tenets, or on particular passages of the Scriptures, which at any time have formed the subjects of conversation, have the arguments which I employed to combat what appeared to me to be erroneous in doctrine, been advanced in an acrimonious spirit, or urged in an offensive manner: in one word, that the mind of the Christian, and the courtesy of the gentleman—terms which should be, and which are synonymous, where the mild and gentle spirit of Christ prevails—have not been forgotten. And I intend that the rule of Christian charity shall not be violated, nor the language of intemperance and abuse which never does good to any cause, be introduced in the discussion into which peculiar associations have induced me to enter at the present moment.

It is the injunction of the Apostle Peter, "Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you, a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and reverence." Now if this advice be necessary to be adopted as a general rule, as to the great and cardinal doctrines of the Scriptures, of which every man ought to possess a clear and enlightened understanding, by a daily and studious examination of their precious contents, I apprehend that it is no less necessary to be followed as an imperative rule by the members of the Protestant community in general, and by those of the Established Church in particular. And it is because I think that a vast proportion of those who profess themselves to be Protestants, are not "ready *always* to give an answer to every man that asketh" them *the reasons* upon which their faith is founded, and their communion with the church of Rome has been broken, that I have selected the present text, as one peculiarly appropriate at this particular moment: for, singular enough, this is the very day on which, three centuries since, namely, on the fourth day of October, in the year one thousand five hundred and thirty-five, the people of England had an opportunity of fulfilling the text literally, or in other words, of *searching the Scriptures* fully in their own vernacular tongue. All accounts which have been transmitted, concur in representing that the blessed privilege, which was then conferred on the people, of being

able to read the Scriptures, sanctioned by authority, was embraced and enjoyed "with all readiness of mind," and that they "searched the Scriptures daily whether the things" they had heretofore heard from the lips of their teachers, "were so." The result of their daily and continued "search" was, that "many of them believed," and found that much of what they had hitherto been taught as "doctrines" of Scripture, were but the "commandments of men." Hence the character of their service underwent a mighty and extraordinary change. From drawing nigh unto God with their mouths and their lips only, and in a language of which the ear heard indeed the sound, but the understanding embraced not the sense, they were led to honour him in their hearts, with all the affections of their souls, and with all the energies of their minds. At once simple and rational in their worship, they read in their homes, or they heard in their parish churches and from their pulpits, all the wonderful works of God, all that had been done by himself, and all that had been wrought by his Son, and all that yet can be accomplished by his Spirit, for the present good, and final blessedness of the people, from generation to generation. All this the people, from the highest to the lowest, came in time to understand; and the more they heard or read, the more they prized the blessed privilege of being able "to search" in their own tongue the things that so belonged to their permanent peace, and concerned their everlasting salvation.

And very meet and right, and our bounden duty it is, that *we* should sympathize with their feelings, and appreciate this inestimable blessing; and, merging all our minor differences, on unessential points of discipline and doctrine, unite all hands, and concentrate all hearts in the one undivided effort of transmitting the Bible whole, and uncorrupt, and unimpaired, to the latest generation, and not by our untimely and senseless divisions, and strifes, and emulations, abandon to a wakeful and vigilant foe, an edifice which it has cost such a profusion of human toil and suffering to rear, and such a sacrifice of human blood to cement. If, in our almanacks, there are what are termed certain *red-letter days* registered, on which we are directed to commemorate some historical event, and some national deliverance, *that*, methinks, should stand prominently forth as the greatest of commemorative days—*that* on which the Bible, out of a tongue known but to few, was translated into a language known unto all among the people. It should be a day of national rejoicing—a day of national thanksgiving in the domestic circle, and in the public courts of the Lord's house—a day greatly to be remembered by all the people, as one in which they emerged out of darkness into a marvellous light, by the clear and steady brightness of which their capacities have been sufficiently illuminated to see, and their feet have happily been directed to choose, that good path wherein is to be found, without the brambles and thistles of human error, the truth which gives to man all his worth, by giving him all his knowledge, to be wise unto salvation!

On this ever memorable day, then, were the whole of the Scriptures, which we are enjoined in the text to search, translated into the English tongue, and printed and published: and it is curious to record the title affixed to this mighty effort of the translator's genius and industry. It runs thus: "The BIBLIA—the Bible, i. e. the Holy Scriptures of the Olde and New Testament, faithfully and newly translated out of Doutche and Latyn into English, by Miles Coverdale, folio." This version was complete, and it was directed by authority, that copies of

it should be distributed and placed in the choirs of every parish church, to which the people resorted with the utmost avidity, and read or heard the Scriptures with the utmost pleasure and improvement. Tindal had previously translated the New, and some parts of the Old Testament; but these were ordered to be burnt, as *pestilential and scandalous publications*; and, as many were committed to the flames for dispersing them, the circulation was far from being general. But the torch of inquiry had been lighted by such as had been circulated, and nothing could quench the spirit which had been aroused. Neither the flames of persecution, nor the writings even of the accomplished More against Tindal's translations, could check the ardour with which they were sought and studied; and they had the effect of paving the way for the reception of the mightier and more successful enterprise of his brother labourer in this holy vineyard—Coverdale. In the same celestial course, or hemisphere, indeed, there had appeared about a century and a half antecedently—(for the visits of these spiritual luminaries have been and are like those of angels, “few and far between;” or those of comets, occasionally, but once or twice in centuries)—there appeared a star of extraordinary magnitude and splendour, not inappropriately termed, the *Morning-star of the Reformation*, John Wiclit. I have no difficulty in admitting the correctness of this designation; but while I think that Wiclit was the *Morning-star*, I regard Coverdale in no other light than as the *Day-star* of the Reformation; since the copies of the Scriptures translated by the latter were sanctioned by authority; and by means of the press, their circulation was immense, and their readers numerous. Whereas the translation of Wiclit was made before the art of printing had been discovered; and the labour necessarily attendant upon transcription, rendered the number of copies dispersed comparatively small and limited. His translation was read with uncommon avidity by those who were so fortunate as to be able to procure copies of it; but the numbers were few, and its circulation among the people must have been confined, more especially as every effort was made to arrest its dispersion, and an act of parliament even was subsequently passed, by which the laity were prohibited from reading any translation of the Bible in English.

Whatever repugnance or opposition an enactment of this sort might occasion, still, when we regard the general ignorance \*, and the abject mental slavery in which the minds of the great mass of the people were then held, we shall

\* Nothing could be more deplorably low than the ebb of classical literature, and the general ignorance of the priests, about the period at which Coverdale's translation was made; of which I can give no greater proof than that the Greek language was scarcely known at either of the two Universities, and that an Italian, of the name of *Caius Auberinus*, was employed by the University of Cambridge, to compose its ordinary Latin epistles, for each of which he received a fee of twenty-pence. About this period also, no principle was more strongly maintained and acted upon, than that the decrees of Bishops were to be held of greater authority than the Scriptures, of which the translation of a single text was interdicted, and any person or persons so offending, were excommunicated. One *Richard Butler*, merely for having read certain chapters of the Evangelists, in English, which were represented as *erroneous and damnable books*, was cited before the Bishop of London, and this a few years only before Coverdale's translation, viz., in 1512; and the illustrious Dean Colet, the founder of St. Paul's school, was subjected by the same Bishop (Fitzjames), to ecclesiastical censure, for having merely translated the *pater-noster* into English! Erasmus, in a letter in which he alluded to the general ignorance of that period, remarked, that to understand Greek is heresy—in short every thing to which they (priests) are not accustomed, is heresy. See *Erasmi Epist. Tab. 12, Ep. 10*; also, the Constitutions of Arundel and Fox, Henry VIII., p. 10.

have little hesitation in admitting that its influence must have been great, and that the number of the readers of the English Bible, or even of the few partial versions in the Anglo-Saxon language, which had been transcribed before the appearance of Wiclif's translation, was but small. There are still in existence numerous versions of Wiclif's Bible in manuscript, of which I have seen two copies in the Bodleian and Sion College libraries; and it is singular that his translation of the Old Testament has never yet appeared in print. In reference to the various manuscripts still extant of Wiclif's translation, an esteemed friend\* of mine, in his late elegant biographical work on this great Reformer, has the following remarks: "We may readily judge of the activity and eagerness with which they were originally circulated, when we find that such a multitude of copies have still survived the exterminating zeal of papal inquisitors. That the appearance of such a work occasioned among the Romanists the deepest alarm, and the hottest indignation, is perfectly notorious. The influx of light naturally produced consternation among those whose element was darkness. His work was denounced and proscribed, as tainted almost with the guilt of sacrilege."

It is now quite time that I should proceed, after these preliminary remarks (which I trust are not unseasonable nor injudicious at this moment, in which we need to be so much reminded of our past and present mercies), to explain the purpose to which I mean to apply the words of our most blessed Lord in the text. I mean to *test* by it a few of the leading dogmas, or doctrines of that church with which we have broken communion; and on account of our *protestation* against these dogmas and doctrines, the name by which we are known has been derived.

The word "Scriptures," mentioned in the text, means literally nothing more than "the writings;" and, by way of eminence, they are so called, in order that they may be distinguished from all other writings whatsoever; and, as at the time at which the injunction in the text was given, the Scriptures, or writings, of the Old Testament were then only in existence, our Lord could have referred only to that portion of the Bible, or the Book, containing the revelation of the will of God. These books or writings, not only spoke to whom they were then addressed by our Lord, but those to whom they are now addressed by his Spirit are directed to *search* diligently, and piously to examine and *scrutinize*, as the Greek word† might perhaps be better rendered: and as we have the authority of our Lord for asserting that this portion of the Bible *testified* of himself—"Search or scrutinize the Scriptures, and they are they which testify of me"—we contend, that the injunction to search, and investigate, and closely to scrutinize them, extends as much to the Scriptures of the New, as it does to the Scriptures of the Old, Testament. And here, upon this point, all argument on the subject must turn, and upon this one point no difference of opinion *should* exist among the members of any community professing itself to be Christian. The command is express and imperative. It is quite impossible to evade its force, or explain away its obligation, however

\* Rev. C. W. Le Bas. See p. 233.—The publication of the Lives of our First Reformers at the present moment are wise and seasonable.

† Ἐρευνᾶτε—scrutamini—scrutinize. It is the judicious remark of Beza: "In hoc hodie non minus ab iis peccatur qui ad Scripturatum lectionem, non veritatis inde inquirendæ studium, sed prejudicatas opiniones aut aliquid etiam deterius adferunt; id est que nec videndo vident, nec audiendo audiunt, nec legendo discunt."

subtile the argument, or plausible the theory. The command is so plain, that even he that runs may read, and understand, and confound, by a “*Thus saith the Lord,*” the proudest theologian, and the haughtiest polemic. None can be so illiterate as not to see that where there is a “*Thus saith the Lord,*” or in other words, where in any passage in which Christ is the speaker and Christ is the teacher of any precept or command—no single individual, however elevated his station, and no public body, however numerous or respectable its members—no head of a particular communion, and no general council, however composed, can impair or supersede the authority upon which such precept or command has been founded. Now apply this argument to the text. It is Christ who says “Search the Scriptures.” What, therefore, in plain terms, is the inference to be drawn? Why that all, as in duty bound to the great Head of the Church, must obey the command without mental reserve, and with unqualified submission; and I further argue, that He who gave the command, must have had some wise and substantial reason in view for having given it. Then the question is, What was that reason?—(for I suspect, if the Scriptures were to be searched, they must be placed in our hands, or where would have been the sense of the command?)—It was this, that in the Law, and in the Psalms, and in the Prophecies of the old dispensation, the testimony and the things concerning Jesus were to be found, and which He himself attests were fulfilled in him, who was the way, and the truth, and the life, and the end of the law. Now let this be admitted—it cannot by any artifice be evaded—you will then reason thus, that the search or scrutiny could never be attended with danger; on the contrary, that whenever it was conducted with no other design than that of informing the understanding, extending the knowledge, and rectifying the temper and life of the searcher, as to the contents of the Scriptures, the tendency must, at all times and in every instance, be beneficial; the result all-important. And wherefore? Why because “all Scripture was given by inspiration of God,” and has no other object, and can produce no other effect, but to be “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” But, beside all these reasons for studying and searching the Scriptures with a righteous mind, and a teachable spirit, of what sense or signification would be the commendation bestowed on Timothy, that from a child he had known the Holy Scriptures, which were able to make him, *and every one else*, wise unto salvation, through faith, which is in Christ Jesus? Or of what use or benefit the prayer of David, “Give me understanding according to thy Word;” and other petitions and expressions of a like import, interspersed throughout various portions of the Scriptures? I would particularly specify that cardinal passage in which are briefly comprehended the orthodox doctrine and all-essential faith of every believer—“This is life eternal to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.”

But it is really a waste of time to insist upon a matter, so palpable to the understanding, so clear to the apprehension of the commonest and most un instructed intellect. If I wanted an argument for the translation of the Scriptures, and their distribution among the people, here it is supplied to my hand in this text; and with this one command would I put to flight whatever might be advanced from any quarter whatsoever against their free and universal diffusion amongst all classes of the community, and more especially the poor and ignorant, that they might read, and learn, and inwardly digest them, to the

improvement of their minds, and the salvation, happily, of their souls ~~as their~~ best companion in solitude, and their surest comforter in affliction. I have thought it necessary thus to advert to this point, because, as you well know, there are those of a different communion from our own, who *still* persist in thinking, that the Scriptures ought *not* to be open to the inspection of the people, and that, in spite of the injunction of the great Head of the Church, *conveyed in my text*, the laity should be prohibited from searching, and scrutinizing their contents. I remember but lately having had some conversation on this very point with some, otherwise intelligent, members of the communion to which I have alluded, by whom it was contended, that the command was not to be considered as a general rule, but to be confined in its application to those only to whom the interpretation of the Scriptures has been confined, and that, in a word, without such authorized interpretations, the Scriptures would only bewilder the understanding, and multiply sects and heresies amongst the people. For my own part, an objection of this kind, arising from the numerous opinions to which an open and unreserved appeal to the Scriptures might give rise, has not upon me the slightest weight or influence. For so long as human nature continues in its present state, a strict uniformity of opinion as to ecclesiastical discipline, or doctrine, cannot be expected; differences of view will exist; and I am yet to learn that any optical instrument has been so constructed as to reflect upon the mental retina of *all* precisely the same aspect of any particular object, as it may have reflected on others. I should hail this as the happiest of human inventions; but it would be delirious to expect it till that most blessed era shall arrive, when, in the magnificent language of prophecy, “the Spirit of our Lord shall rest upon us—the spirit of wisdom and understanding. the fear of the Lord shall be before our eyes, and righteousness shall be the girdle of our loins: the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion, and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them.”

But besides, there is one point—to me of infinite importance—which seems to have never entered into the calculations, or to have eluded the notice, of such as object to the diffusion of the Scriptures among the laity. While these combatants have been wrangling and disputing the point, and spending that time in *contesting*, which should have been spent in *practising*, there have been myriads and myriads of searchers into the plain letter of the Scriptures, which has formed their daily meat and drink, and their most costly and nourishing aliment, to whom it was bliss as they journeyed on in their pilgrimage heavenwards, to have been ignorant that such angry disputation existed, and such hostile passions had been set on fire on points so clear, and on matters so simple. We hear too much of the world of theological polemics—too little of the thousands and the tens of thousands, who are content to read with the teachableness of infants, and to receive with the spirit of angels, that open and unsealed volume which, in the straw-built shed, and in the humble cottage, is the best companion of the poor, the best enlightener of the ignorant, and the best comforter of the distressed—which imparts to them the best of all knowledge, the knowledge of the one true God, and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent; and makes them wise in the pursuit and attainment of that salvation which the Holy Scriptures, line upon line, teach, and Christ, by his precious blood and atoning sacrifice, hath purchased for them.

I shall now endeavour to *test*, by the text, several of the leading dogmas or doctrines of that Church, against which the members of our own communion protest as contrary to the Scriptures. They are the following: tradition; the supremacy of the Pope; transubstantiation; the sacrifice of the mass; adoration of images; and, lastly, the invocation to saints. Of these I shall take notice in order.

And, first, of *Tradition*. As directed by my blessed Master in the text, I commence my search into the precious archives of the Scriptures, and the result of my scrutiny is, that there are only twelve places, including the parallel passages, in which the word occurs. Now out of these twelve passages in which I find the word, the language employed in ten of them is any thing but the language of commendation. But even admitting, which I do not, that the language of St. Paul in one, and of St. Peter in another place, may be said to favour the doctrine, what saith Christ? It is impossible for language to be less equivocal, or reprobation to be more strong; and with me, the testimony of Jesus is decisive on the point. “Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees which were of Jerusalem, saying, Why do thy disciples transgress the *tradition* of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread.” Now hear the answer of Christ. “But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your *traditions*? Ye have made the commandment of God of *none effect by your tradition!* Ye hypocrites, &c., in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.” It is worth while to hear the remark of Christ, when told by his own disciples that the Pharisees were offended at what he had said in allusion to their traditions. “Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.” And rooted up doth a doctrine of this kind deserve to be, which hath nothing in truth or Scripture to support it, which might be made the ready minister of the most monstrous crimes and of the most heterodox doctrines. Such, indeed, was the case in the time of our Lord by those among the Jews who held in higher estimation the oral traditions than the written law, professing a scrupulous regard to the *former*, while they committed the grossest violations of the *latter*. As the Jews pretended that their traditions were delivered by God to Moses upon Mount Sinai, and by him were conveyed to the elders, so the members of the Romish Church allege, without even the shadow of a shade of authority to support them, that traditions were delivered by Christ to the apostles, and by them transmitted to the heads of their own communion, as the successors of the apostles; and this doctrine was strenuously maintained and insisted upon by the Council of Trent\*, at which all access to the Sacred

\* In a memorial presented to Pope Julius III., Oct. 20, 1553, by the Bishops of Bononia (Termula, Capruia and Thessalonica) relative to the prevailing abuses and corruptions, the following important admission is made: “We believe as an article of faith what the Council of Trent has decreed on tradition, that our Lord Jesus Christ and his apostles delivered more precepts, relating to manners and faith, by word of mouth, than are in the Scriptures; and that these, without writing, were handed down to us; and although we cannot prove this clearly (*for amongst ourselves we plainly acknowledge, that we have no proofs, but some sort of conjectures to make out what we teach concerning tradition*), yet we confess this to be true, because the Roman Church maintains it. In the days of the apostles (*to tell you the truth, but you must be silent*) and for several years after them, there was no mention made of either Pope or Cardinals—much less of any of those doctrines, laws, constitutions, nor of this sovereignty, which we now exercise over people and nations.” “We have reserved the most considerable advice, which we could at this time give your Holiness, to the last.” They then proceed to

Volume and all interpretations of the Holy Scriptures, contrary to their own peculiar tenets, were prohibited. Upon this point then, it is unnecessary for me to expend any further remark. To the question, whether we do now stand bound in the sight of God to yield to traditions urged by the Church of Rome, the same obedience and reverence we do to his written law, honouring equally, and adoring both as divine, I answer in the language of the admirable Hooker, with a simple negative, No \*; and conclude with the Church of England, that the Holy Scriptures containeth all things necessary to salvation; so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation.

I have now to test by the text (the doctrine of tradition having broken down under its weight and pressure), the *Supremacy of the Pope*. Under the direction of my Lord, then, I take the Scriptures in my hand, and with no other view but that of truth, I enter upon the scrutiny as to this point. And what is the result of my search? Why that the name even is not to be discovered in any one verse or portion of the Sacred Volume. Then what is the authority upon which the assumption of the supremacy rests? We are told (but assertion is no proof), that it rests chiefly upon one particular passage of the Scriptures. To that passage, then, we refer, as authority either to refute the assumption, or to establish the doctrine of the supremacy. "When Jesus came into the coasts of Cæsarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am? And *they* said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto *them*, But whom say ye that I am? And *Simon Peter* answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." This promptitude of Peter to answer a question, personally addressed by our Lord as much to the other disciples as to himself, is in perfect keeping with all that we collect from the Scriptures concerning the generous ardour of his character, and the general impetuosity of his temper. We have in this very chapter another instance on record. When our Lord made a communication to the disciples generally of his approaching sufferings and death, Peter, we read, instantly began to talk, and rebuke him. What did our Saviour do and say to him? "He turned, and said unto him, Get thee behind me, *Satan*: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men †."

suggest that the Pope should use all his force to prevent the Gospel from being read, and they add, "Really, whosoever shall diligently weigh the Scripture, and then consider all the things that are usually done in our churches, will find there is great difference betwixt them; and that this doctrine of ours is very unlike, and in many things quite repugnant to it." I need not make a single comment on this extract; a Protestant could scarcely find any thing more to his purpose.

\* Hooker's Eccles. Polity. Vol. I. p. 270.

† I have ever thought that the indiscreet and intemperate zeal on so many occasions displayed by Peter (witness his conduct in the case of Malchus), repels the idea of any pre-eminence being intended by our Lord of that apostle over his fellow-labourers. All, I take it, were on a perfect equality, and any display of a spirit of superiority of one over the others would have been instantly repressed, as we know, indeed, that it was. There never appeared on earth one who possessed, in a higher degree, so sound and sober a judgment as our Lord; and he perfectly well knew, that if the innocence of the dove were not counteracted with the wisdom of the serpent, or, in other words, the zeal of the martyr was not

But I must proceed to quote the remainder of the passage: "And Jesus answered and said unto Peter," addressing him in the Syriac language, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed *it* unto thee (meaning his frank and prompt acknowledgment of Christ's divinity), but my Father which is in heaven. And I say unto thee, *that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*" This, then, is the passage on which the supremacy of the Pope is built. Now, whatever sense may be affixed, and interpretation be given to the passage in question, my business is with the Scriptures alone, by which only any position advanced, and any assertion made, are to be judged. One thing, then, is clear in this passage—not the slightest mention is made, not the remotest allusion is given, as to any thing concerning the head of the Romish Church. The Scriptures are silent on the point: therefore, not bearing the test to which the doctrine is subjected, it must be rejected as anti-scriptural. But a word or two as to the address itself. If we consult other portions of the Scriptures, we shall find that Christ, and Christ alone, is the Rock on which the Church, or, in other words, the cardinal doctrine of his Sonship and divinity are built, and these are they against which the gates of hell, or the efforts of the devil and his agents shall never prevail. Not surely Peter. *He a rock!* which could not even avert the very first shock of adversity, or the very first fury of the storm to which it was opposed! Not indeed Peter, nor any other of his associates and companions, who all fled and forsook their heavenly Master in the hour and at the season in which he most needed the countenance of a companion to support, and the sympathy of a friend to cheer him. Christ alone was the Rock, which passed with the fathers through the sea, and of which we must drink through this wilderness of a world, being ourselves "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone," the Cephas or rock of our salvation\*. Were it to my present purpose, I could prove from the writings of several of the fathers, who assuredly, from the circumstance of their having lived nearer the times of the apostles, are more likely to be better interpreters of the Scriptures, and better testimonies than subsequent writers, that the address of our Lord to Peter was meant to refer, not to him personally, but to the doctrine to which his lips had just given utterance; and it is on the rock of Peter's confession, according to an ancient father, Hilary, that the edifice of the church has been erected†. From the silence, then, of the Scriptures, and the testimonies of the apostolical fathers, there is no foundation for the supremacy of the Popes, nor for any other interpretation but the one just given. In truth, for the first six hundred years of the Christian Church, or of what I may call its best and palmy days, such an assumption had never been advanced: nor do I think that there is the slightest authority for assuming that Peter had any pre-eminence over any

tempered with the judgment of the sage, the Gospel would stand but little chance of finally accomplishing the purpose for which it should be preached. If we may credit the ecclesiastical historian, Eusebius, who gives as his authority Clement (the same, probably, whose name appears in one of the Epistles, and who certainly lived in the times, and was conversant with the acts of the apostles), that James surnamed Justus was constituted by the apostles themselves as their head or bishop.

\* 1 Cor. x. 4; Ephes. ii. 20.

† Hæc una felix fidei Petra, quam Petrus ore suo confessus est. *Vid. Hil. de Trinitate, lib. 5.* Greg. Nyssen. Chrys. Cyril. and Jerome, may be consulted as evidences on this point.

of the other apostles, nor that he was ever even consecrated as *bishop*, or ever resided within the walls of Rome. I know what Baronius and others have asserted on the subject; but the Scriptures are silent, and it is scarcely to be credited that the mention of a circumstance so important would have been omitted, had it ever occurred.

With respect to the infallibility of the Popes, the Scriptures are equally silent; and surely I may be allowed to say, without exposing myself to the imputation of advancing any thing either uncharitable in spirit, or uncourteous in language, that the assumption of infallibility on the part of any human being, however elevated his rank, or eminent his piety, is little consistent with the spirit of Christian humility and meekness; and it were surely somewhat like blasphemy to predicate this of any one, when repudiated even by the great Head of the Church himself on a very interesting occasion, recorded in the Scriptures—" Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God." Besides, before it could be conceded to the Popes, it must be proved that their private conduct was exempt from a single reproach, and their public character unstained by a single vice. The language of censure is at all times painful to be employed in reference to persons in exalted stations; yet must it not be withholden, when the interests of religion and the cause of truth require its exercise. If, therefore, historical facts are not to be falsified, the private characters of many of the Popes were any thing but what they should have been in persons claiming to themselves the attribute of infallibility. And how, again, could such a claim be advanced, with the slightest degree of truth and justice, when it is but too well known that the most rancorous spirit invaded the breasts of the members of that hierarchy, and the sight of all good Christians was pained by the appearance of two bishops, each claiming at the same period equal infallibility—one division of Europe siding with Pope Urban VI., who resided at Rome, and the other part of Europe espousing the cause of Clement VII., who removed to Avignon, in France\*.

These are historical facts, which none can dispute or gainsay; which none can palliate or excuse; and they are sufficient to establish the point, that the claim of infallibility cannot be appropriated with truth to the one or the other, or indeed to any one clothed upon with mortal flesh and infirmity, and subject, as every one is more or less, to the influx of *evil and corrupt affections*. Unhappy is that religious community in which the *sacerdotal* becomes at all allied with the *political* character and those whose *business* it is to seek peace and ensue it, entangle and embroil themselves in the politics of this world; with which the priesthood, if they would learn a lesson from the example, and even the silence of their Divine Master, would have nought to do, unless, indeed, in those extraordinary emergencies and times, when the throne and the altar are equally assailed, and when *silence becomes the opprobrium, and neutrality the crime*, of a good citizen and a good Christian. But I am alluding to ordinary occasions, on which it is far better for the clergy of all religious communities to avoid the stormy atmosphere of state politics; for I am justified by the Scriptures, by history, and by reason in asserting, that a curse is entailed, rather than a blessing produced, by the interference of the priesthood: and I add, in reference to the Romish communion, that had the banns against all alliance of the *sacerdotal* with the *political* character been

\* All Europe, except France and Spain, Scotland, Sicily, and Cyprus, acknowledge the Italian, Urban VI. to be Pope.

originally forbidden, and had no union been subsequently formed between them, it is as clear to my mind as the clearest of mathematical demonstrations, that no severance from the see of Rome would ever have occurred; the name of Protestant would in all probability never have been known, and the title of *Catholic*, of which she boasts as her proudest cognomen, but which she has lost, would up to this moment have been retained. And this I moreover add, addressing myself to that communion, Divorce yourself from all unhallowed embraces with the polities of empires and states; rid yourself of all such things as are an insult to the reason and understanding of mankind, and directly at variance with the strict letter and spirit of the Scriptures, such as the doctrine of transubstantiation, and the mass: sweep the Augean clean of these abominations, and others of a like kind, and I for one, as a Protestant minister, will return into the bosom of your Church, with which my forefathers broke communion chiefly because you acted contrary to the letter, and corrupted the simplicity of Gospel truth; and whose religion is precisely what yours is, save and except your mutilations and corruptions. Pope Adrian VI., through his Nuncio, at the Diet of Nuremberg, in 1523, represented "that the sins of Rome were manifest and grievous, and that even from the *head* down to the *inferior* clergy, all had gone astray, and that none were free from guilt—no, not one." Had a timely reform taken place, it is more than probable that the Protestant Reformation would never have been heard of. But the abuses and corruptions of the Church and her clergy were suffered to continue, and hence the events to which, under God, nothing *more* contributed than the translation of the Scriptures, in which what they read they found quite repugnant to what they saw! A word or two in passing, let me add, in reference to present scenes and times. Think not of ever regaining the ascendancy you have lost, even though you were alone to cultivate the arts of peace, and study to act up to the apostolical rule (applicable as much to religious communities as to private individuals), to mind your own business. The intelligence of the age is against you. You are only *powerful* when the people are *ignorant*. Enlighten, educate the nations; remove the darkness that yet covers a portion of the earth, and the gross darkness that yet overshadows much of the globe: let the Gentiles come to the full sight of the Lord, and the pure knowledge of his Word. You are *powerless* as an instrument of political priestcraft; but, in the exact ratio in which you cease to be so, a *blessing* to such as belong to your communion, and attend your ministrations. Have you been lately acting a wise and judicious part? Is it in good taste, and with perfect consistency, that you should rebuke the reformers of the sixteenth century—you who, to a man, are now reformers in the nineteenth century, and who, together with your representatives in parliament, are in league and combination, expressed or implied, with those who, at their political unions, and in their public documents, have professed that their object is to root out and to pull down, to destroy and to throw down all state religions, and ecclesiastical establishments?

O lamentable, this inconsistency! O, perilous, this confederacy of yours! And this, too, with those who are ten thousand times more aliens from you in doctrine and discipline than ourselves, and who, like some of our first reformers, lamentably senseless in this respect, as they confessedly were in some others, would still deem any approximation to the discipline of your Church, the habiliments of your priesthood, and the crucifixes of your altars, as the

"remnants of the Amorites," as the touch of the leprosy, or as the "accursed things." You may be mutually using each other as ladders for reaching the point or eminence to which it is your ambition and wish to climb. Be it so. But mind; our own Church being then in the dust, and the stones of which it was once composed being then used as fit only to *macadamize* our roads and to pave our streets, or to repair our bridges and highways, as some political fanatic lately raved—mind, put not forth your little finger to touch its revenues, or appropriate any of its spoils. The instant you did so, you would be crushed to the earth; and perhaps repose in the same grave, and mingle your bones in the same dust, as your exterminated and crushed protestant fellow-sufferers and brethren. See what such an alliance would produce inevitably and speedily. How prized and recompensed the merit of your co-operation, and the value of your services! What, then, have you to expect from spoliation and robbery? The Church lying in the dust, its spoils would be divided amongst the heterogenous mass of spoliators who, strong in union against the Church while it stood, would, when prostrate, turn their weapons against one another, the one sect struggling with another sect for the mastery and pre-eminence. We know, or at least we ought to know, what human nature is, and how little concord and conformity could be expected among such elements of strife and confusion. Would the Independent be content that what is here, in these western parts of the kingdom, the largest sect by far, the Bryanites, should attain the pre-eminence, and enjoy the ecclesiastical revenues? or one of the multifarious sections into which they are divided, be disposed to acquiesce in the division of the spoils, or the appropriation of the revenues to another? But whether or no such would be the then consummation of things, *you would* come in, to a certainty, for no share of the spoliation. A wiser man than any in our different religious communities hath remarked, "The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be. Is there any thing whereof it may be said, See, this is new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us." You have read, perhaps, in the elegant pages of your own Lingard, what took place at a certain period of our history. It forms, perhaps, one of the most melancholy chapters in the historian's work; but it is read in vain unless it shall have read a triumphant lecture on the impolicy of forming such associations, of which the termination generally is no good to the community at large nor any permanent benefit to individuals in particular.

*Transubstantiation* is a doctrine of the Romish Church, to which I shall next direct your attention, and subject it to the same test as I have those of tradition, and the supremacy and infallibility of the Popes and their Church. The meaning of the word *transubstantiation* is literally the change of one substance into, or over, that of another: and it is asserted by the members of the Romish communion, that immediately as the priest has consecrated the bread and wine in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, the substance becomes changed, and instead of being symbols or figures, they are the actual, and real, and identical body of Christ which suffered on the cross, and that we literally drink his blood, and as literally eat his flesh. This doctrine, revolting as it is to the common sense and reason of mankind, was never heard of till about the middle of the ninth century, when it attracted some attention, and gave rise to some controversy; but it was not till the thirteenth century that it was formally introduced and adopted, and the name by which it is now known, was

given to it by Pope Innocent III. at the fourth Lateran council. It is further asserted, that on the substance being changed at consecration, and the bread and wine being converted into the natural body and blood of Christ, and ceasing, in short, to be any longer bread and wine, the identical person of the Redeemer is present: in other words, his real presence enjoyed, as much so as at the time and place in which he presented the bread and wine to his twelve disciples at the paschal supper.

We will now refer to the passage of the Scriptures upon which the Papists have constructed this doctrine, and have grounded their belief in this article; and as it is *one* to which the very highest degree of importance has been attached by all denominations and sects of professing Christians—more, in the judgment of some theologians, than is warranted by the Scriptures—your more particular attention is besought. I have no hesitation whatever in stating my own opinion on the matter to be this: that all duties enjoined in the written word by God are of like importance, and are to be observed without any reservation of mind, or any difference of regard; or that if a greater importance be attached to one more than to another duty, it should assuredly be to that which our Lord himself has pronounced to be “the great commandment;” that which indeed is the foundation of all religion and religious duties—the love and worship of the Lord our God: and these we are enjoined to tender with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our mind, and with all our strength. It is always the safer and better course to adhere as much as possible to the strict letter of what God has written, and not to force a fanciful construction on any particular passage we meet with; for it is to this cause that have been mainly attributable the many erroneous tenets which have been promulgated, or, what St. Peter himself has termed, “the damnable heresies” which have been “brought in” by false teachers; each deeming himself warranted to entertain his own views, and to proclaim his own interpretations of the Scriptures, by which a shipwreck has been made of the faith of some weak professors, and the peace and harmony of the Christian community have been outraged and destroyed. It is a perilous thing to adventure on the stormy and turbulent sea of conjecture, and none there be (unless they possess a clear head to direct, and a steady hand to steer their vessel), but must founder amid the rocks and quicksands to which they are exposed at every course they take, and in every direction they go.

These remarks are not without their point as to the passage which I shall now quote: “And as they were eating (*Christ* and his twelve disciples), Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it *to the disciples*, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it *to them*, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.” It was at the paschal commemoration of the departure of the Israelites out of Egypt, that these words were spoken, and this act was done. They have been recorded by three of the evangelists, with scarcely any variation of phraseology; but an important addition has been made to the two accounts of St. Matthew and St. Mark by St. Luke. He has added, “This do in remembrance of me.” The command to observe, and the motive for observing it are superadded. But this injunction,

you will remark, was addressed to the twelve disciples, including the traitor, Iscariot, as a particular injunction to them, and not as a general rule for the world at large; though it has been very properly adjudged that what was good for the apostles to do, is equally wise and good for us, on the authority of Christ, to follow. And hence the observance of it has been continued and preserved in our Church as a commemorative ordinance, or a blessed remembrance of Christ's love and goodness towards us in his adventurous undertakings, and unmerited sufferings, on our account. But the end and meaning of the institution are misunderstood and mistaken, if any superstitious feelings be awakened, and any causeless alarm be entertained. It is a blessed ordinance, and it should draw all men towards it with the cords of love, and with the glowing emotions of a grateful and most affectionate heart. There, indeed, is Christ present to witness the approach of our persons, and to receive the records of our love, as we trust he has this day, to our great and endless comfort; but not more present, nor in a manner otherwise different, than at any other ordinance of religion, public or private: for at all our services, after a spiritual manner, he is at hand; himself having declared, and this is all-satisfactory on the subject, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

You have now heard the passage; you have searched the Scriptures, and it is now asked whether, by the test to which the doctrine has been subjected, there is any thing to give it sanction and authority; in a word, whether it be not as revolting to reason, as it is contrary to Scripture? Were it consistent with the brevity with which, in an exercise of this kind, I am necessarily obliged to conduct my notices of the leading doctrines of the Romish communion, it would be a very easy matter for me to prove that the fathers of the Christian Church are all opposed to this dogma in particular, and from the writings of Beda, Ambrose, Augustin, Isidore, Jerome, Fulgentius, and others, shew that they viewed the words of Christ precisely in the same light in which they are regarded by the members of our own communion. Isidore remarks, that sacraments are so called because, under the veil and coverture of bodily things, God's divine power and virtue doth secretly work the efficacy or power of the said sacrament, and teach us to discern the Lord's body in the sacrament from the natural body\*:" and as to his presence, all the fathers concur in representing that Christ is present—not corporeally, or carnally, or naturally; but, as in a sacrament, by his Spirit, and with his grace. The conclusion, therefore, to which we come, is this: that, as the doctrine has not the authority of the Scriptures to sanction it, and as it is equally against the enlightened judgment of the best and wisest interpreters, and against the common sense of mankind, it is to be repudiated, and to be considered, in the language of one of our articles, as overthrowing the nature of a sacrament, and giving occasion to many superstitions.

*The Sacrifice of the Mass* is the next dogma of the Romish communion which I shall subject to the test of the Scriptures. The word *mass* is derived from the Latin word *messa*, and is employed to distinguish the whole service of the Roman communion. In looking into, and in searching the Scriptures, no such word occurs; nor would the occurrence of such a term be considered as of the

\* *Isidor. Origin. Lib. 6.* Isidore was a man of extraordinary learning and sanctity, and may be regarded, with a few exceptions, as one of the best interpreters of the *Scriptures*.

slightest importance if employed only to signify or designate the public and general service of any particular Church. It is not, therefore, to the *use* of the term that any objection is raised, but to the abuse of which it was made the panderer and instrument. When, however, the mass—a word which was never introduced till four or five centuries after the birth of Christ, and is to be found in none of the writings of the Greek or Latin fathers within the period above mentioned—when it is represented as a *sacrifice*, we demur, and are prepared to prove by the Scriptures, that there is but *one* sacrifice, in which we are authorized to believe—the one sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross, who was the Lamb slain once, and once only, to take away the sins of the whole world, and that *that*, and no other, is the sacrifice which can be instrumental to man's salvation. No human agent has the slightest power on earth to forgive sin or to use any mass or service as a sacrifice for the atonement and absolution of the people. It is the Son of Man only that hath power to forgive sin, and it is only through the sacrifice of his death, which we commemorate in the Eucharist, that an acceptable mass or service can be performed, and a plenary absolution be obtained.

To effect this blessed consummation, no human agency, as I have said, is of the slightest avail: the sacrificee, and nought but the sacrifice, of the death of Jesus Christ, once, and only once offered, has been made, “to the end that all that believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” It was in an age in which superstition and darkness sat brooding over the Christian church in the eighth century, that the custom of what are called private masses was introduced; and being found a productive source of revenue and influence to the priesthood, was pertinaciously maintained through succeeding centuries, and has been continued to the present moment, without one single passage of the Scriptures to prove its authority and to justify its retention. The administration of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was every where embellished, or rather deformed, with a variety of senseless fopperies, which destroyed the beautiful simplicity of that affecting and salutary institution\*; and at the private masses performed, an authority was assumed by the priests of receiving the confessions, and conferring absolution for the sins, of such as attended their private or public masses. The doctrine was this: that it was absolutely necessary for a sinner to make auricular confession to, and be absolved by, these priests, though God hath nowhere said so; but it is not necessary for him to be contrite or to repent of his sins, out of love to God, though God himself, in his own Word, hath a hundred times said it is. Why must a solitary mass, bought for a piece of money, performed and participated by a priest alone, in a private corner of a church, be, not only against the sense of Scripture and the primitive church, but also against common sense and grammar, called a communion, and be accounted useful to him that buys it, though he never himself receive the Sacrament, or but once a year, but for this reason, that there is great gain, but no godliness at all, in this doctrine? Why in the public eucharists must the priest only receive in both kinds, and the people be put off with a piece of a sacrament, against the plainest texts of Scripture and the practice of the then church for at least a thousand years after Christ (as some of the Romanists themselves have confessed), but that this tends to the advancement of the honour and estimation of the priest, as being alone qualified to offer up an entire **sacri-**

\* See Mosheim, vol. ii. p. 270, and Bull's Sermons.

fice of Christ's body and blood? The representation that the real body and blood of *Christ* are sacrificed at each communion, and that when the host is carried about for the sick and dying the real body and blood of Christ are uplifted, is manifestly unauthorized by any thing to be found in the Scriptures, and therefore not to be entertained, unless, indeed, by such as have put equally at defiance the sanction of the written Word and the dictates of common sense. A church which promulgates such a dogma as that it can create a God at each communion, and therefore, is above all kings, and nations, and people, has lost all claim to infallibility; and by this very act of perverting a plain injunction of the Scriptures, justifies us in withdrawing from her communion and in *protesting* against such an abomination.

The doctrine of the Romish Communion upon which I shall next touch is the *Adoration of Images*. Now upon this subject I have referred, as I have before done with respect to my other notices of the Romish dogmas, to the Scriptures, for the purpose of discovering whether there be a single text or passage to authorize such adoration or worship. I have searched the Scriptures; and the result of my scrutiny is, that, out of about a hundred and sixty passages in which the word *image*, or its synonymous word *idol*, occurs, there is not one verse or passage which gives the slightest sanction to this doctrine of the Romish communion; and I will further add, that in all in which image-worship is mentioned, it receives from the written Word an express and implicit prohibition. Indeed, it may be said, with the most perfect regard to truth, that if there be any one point on which the Divine mind is more sensitive than another, if I may so express myself, or, in other words, the Almighty is more particularly jealous, it is on this very practice; for this, perhaps, among other reasons that might be alleged, on account of the proneness and liability of the human mind to be betrayed into the commission of this idolatrous act; for it may be remarked, that the Greek word εἰδωλον, translated in the Septuagint from the Hebrew one בָּלֶג, image, signifies also an idol. It expresses and means one and the same thing in the Scriptures. They therefore who prostrate themselves before an image, do, in strictness of speech, bow themselves down and proffer homage to an idol. They justly expose themselves to the charge of being the worshippers of idols.

Now I have remarked that the passages are numerous in which such adoration is prohibited, and such profanation is condemned in language, too, than which nothing can be imagined more direct and emphatic. Such passages must be familiar to those who are in the habit of perusing the Scriptures, or of hearing them read. It will, therefore, be but a waste of time to transfer them from the written Word into this sermon. But there is one which it is quite impossible that I should omit to quote, because, in my mind, it is decisive on the point, as it must be, I apprehend, in the judgment of all who are prepared to receive the Bible as the only authorized standard of the revelation of the will and pleasure of Almighty God. I believe it will be conceded by the members of *all* religious communities, that, if there be any of the precepts and commandments in the written Word which, considering the awful circumstances under which they were promulgated, are, I will not say of more, but of *most* important signification, they are those which are contained in the Decalogue, or the Ten Commandments. Commandments they are, all of which are *obligatory* on the conscience and practice of religious communities, however diversi-

led their modes of worship and their forms of discipline. They teach, first, the duties we owe to God, and, secondly, the duties we owe the one to the other. The four first of the commandments are termed those of the first table, because they refer exclusively to the Supreme Being; and these are of such commanding weight and consequence as must quite disqualify any man from having the slightest claim to his being regarded as a religious being, if he lives either in the occasional evasion or habitual infringement of any one of them. With those only which refer to the first table am I concerned at the present moment, and of them only with the two first. And what are they? What do we read? If any thing hath power to inspire awe and arrest attention, it surely must be the words with which they are introduced to our notice. What voice do we hear? That of men? No; the voice of Omnipotence itself. "God spake these words"—(Let all, then, stand in awe, and hear and obey what He saith)—"God spake these words, and said, I am the Lord thy God, thou shalt have none other gods but me. Thou shalt not make to thyself any *graven image*, nor the likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, nor in the earth beneath, nor in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down to them nor worship them; for I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God, and visit the sins of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me, and shew mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments."

And such is the commandment, and such are the jealousy and hatred expressed. Against whom? Can a question be mooted, or a doubt be harboured, against whom that jealousy is enkindled and that hatred is directed? If words, then, have meaning, if language hath force, it is as clear as truth, in all her majestic splendour and simplicity, that from this one passage (and, for brevity's sake, I omit the curses and denunciations contained in others), I say, from this one passage, all who gaze upon, and bow down and offer incense to, and worship images and idols, carved and manufactured by artificers, and therefore the works and creatures of men's hands, and set them up in the secret corners of the temple, or in the public courts of the sanctuary\*, have the curse and condemnation of a jealous and a wrathful God upon them: yea, whether those images be representations of Himself, whom no eye hath seen, and no hand therefore can carve; or whether they be pictures of the Godhead embodied in the person of Him who once was his express pattern on earth, and now is man's Mediator *alone* in heaven; or whether those images are manufactured to represent one—honourable, indeed, among women, the mother of an incarnate God—once, indeed, an instrument of marvellous agency, but that agency having been fulfilled in the mighty scheme of human redemption, her star at once set on earth, and now only shines forth within the celestial hemisphere, as one of magnitude, indeed, but to be worshipped and adored no more † than any thing besides that is in heaven above, or on the earth beneath; or whether they be images of saints, or reliques of martyrs, or the wood of the cross, or the bones of the dead, or rosaries, or crucifixes, abused to the purposes of superstition and idolatry, I call forth the page of the written Word to attest, that they are all among the accursed things; that the only object of human adoration is Heaven's

\* Augustin remarks, *Simulachra nefas est in Christiano templo collocare.*

† Epiphanius observes, *Et si pulcherrima est Maria, et sancta, et honorata, at non ad ad rationem.*

God, who alone is cognizant of what nor angel, nor saint, nor the Virgin Mary, can or does know, human want and human guilt, and who, if he needs any propitiation to be made, or any intercession to be offered, is satisfied to accept those only of the Mediator between God and man, the God-propitiator and the man-protector, Jesus Christ, who is "now sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high, ever living to make intercession for us," and is constituted the "*one* mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus."

And then, if this be the doctrine of the Scriptures, what becomes of that other dogma of the Romish communion, viz. the *Invocation of Saints*, or, in other words, saint-worship? As the result of an investigation of the Scriptures has proved that there is no manner of authority to justify image-worship, so if we search throughout the numerous passages of the Word of God, we shall not find a single verse or portion of the written Word from which any inference can be drawn that prayers to angels should be addressed, or the intercession of saints are required. We read of their employment, indeed, in heaven; but as to any communion with, or knowledge of us on earth, the Scriptures are silent; and it is quite impossible for us to advance any thing for certain on such a subject, so far removed from human apprehension and human judgment. But this we may say, without hazarding a hasty and dangerous speculation, that all their occupations are of a heavenly nature, and that all their thoughts are so absorbed by doing God's will, as to leave them not a moment's leisure for earthly concerns, even supposing their knowledge extended beyond the confines of the heavenly mansions, or that they knew aught of what was transacted in a world with which death had dissolved their connexion and intercourse. From what we can collect of the heavenly world we image it to ourselves as a region of consummate blessedness; but it may well admit of a question, whether such a representation would be just, whether the blessedness of angel-spirits would be consummate and unalloyed, were they to have cognizance of all that is passing in this lower region. Delightful it is, in one sense, to entertain such an idea, that all communion between the saints and us has not been abrogated by death; and sweetly soothing as it is to the spirit bowed down to the earth by some family bereavement, and mourning for some dear and valued member of the domestic circle, to believe that the intercourse is still continued, yet it is too much to conceive of them, that they would know their duty so little, and wax in their attachment to their Redeemer so languidly, as to interpose their prayers and services in that department which has been so exclusively consigned to him, that of being the *one only* Mediator between God and man, whose mediation is our all in all, to which we can alone trust for having our prayers heard, our persons accepted, our services received, and our offences pardoned. They surely would not be so little sensible of what they themselves owed to the same mediation, as officially to assume the office of mediator, and trench upon the department of the one Mediator, the man Christ Jesus. We conceive not so of these tried and blessed spirits; nor that, had they the knowledge of what is passing here, would they be so unwise as to press a suit which is in far better hands when advanced by Him who hath been retained from on high as our counsel to advocate our cause and propitiate our services \*.

\* It was, perhaps, a good ordinance of one of the ancient churches, seeing the purposes to which images and pictures in churches would be abused: "Placuit in Ecclesiis esse non debere, ne, quod colitur aut adoratur, in parietibus depingatur."

But we need not dwell on such suppositions—the whole stream of Scripture flows contrary to such a doctrine as that of the invocation of the saints or angels. The doctrine of the Scriptures is this, and no other, that all prayer must be addressed to God in the name and through the mediation of Jesus Christ—that the interposition of none other but that of Him is required—that the service of no angels, or saints, or of the blessed Virgin, are requisite—that no other advocate but Christ is necessary—that, in short, if any man sin—and this is the doctrine of cardinal importance and blessing to sinners—“if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins!” And here the doctrine must rest on this pivot, and on this alone. Whatever men may advance, and churches may ordain, the pious and judicious believer, who is instructed in things pertaining to the kingdom of God *out of the Scriptures*, will here repose on this rock his confidence and faith, nor suffer them to be shaken therefrom by any plausible theories, or unauthorized interpolations of God’s blessed Word. In apostolical language then, I say to one and all of you, “Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility, or senseless prostration of the body to images and pictures, and *worshipping of angels*, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, and not holding the Head, from which, all the body by joints and bands having nourishment, ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God\*!” You will perceive from this passage—and the authority of St. Paul is not one to be lightly esteemed—that the worshipping of angels even, who are a higher order of celestial beings, and ordained to minister in holier things, even to do service before the presence, and to attend at the altar of the Lord Jehovah in heaven, is prohibited. Who the angels are is a question to which no other answer can be given than such as is authorized by the written word; and the intimations respecting them are so slight, that it requires the reins of a sound and sober judgment, when we expatiate upon their nature, and describe their offices. In all probability they were created at the time, and within the period, in which the Almighty was engaged in constructing this fabric, and in completing this world of ours; and, at different periods since their creation, have they been employed as harbingers of peace, or as executioners of justice—and even at this moment their ministry is exercised, in a marvellous, but sufficiently intelligible manner, to give consolation and succour to the heirs of salvation, as they are winding their way among the vales, and ascending the hills, of this lower world, in which their *guidance* is so necessary to keep all of us from the briars and thistles which encumber our path, and their *might* is so indispensable to countervail the various mines, which the malice of the devil and the hand of mischief have fabricated at every turn of our path-way heavenwards. And, oh! who can doubt but that it is to the ministry of a holy angel, that the traveller heavenwards owes much of his guardianship by night, and of his preservation by day—much of the good thoughts he entertains, the good resolutions he forms, and many of the known and the *unknown* dangers from which he has

\* It is the judicious remark of Dr. Clark, that the earthly relations, and even the mother of our Lord herself, were constantly so treated by him after such a manner as to repel the idea that they were capable of *doing*, or *suffering*, or *interceding*, any way *meritoriously* for us, as if it were on *purpose* to guard against those gross superstitions, which our Lord foresaw would prevail in the latter ages of the Church.

been rescued? There is no man exercised in the ways of religion, but must have observed, that oftentimes on a sudden, he knows not how, most vigorous, powerful, affecting thoughts of eternity, and the great concerns of religion, have seized and possessed his soul; such affecting thoughts, as at other times, when he composes and sets himself to think of those matters, he cannot, without very great difficulty, if at all, command and retrieve.

But not to dwell on this delightful speculation, nothing can be proved from the ministry and employment of angelic beings with ourselves in serving God, that worship should be paid to these superior intelligences. And if not to them, assuredly not to others, who are called saints in the Roman calendar, and still less to the dead, who have been canonized as saints; to whom invocation should be made, and intercession offered. Dead? Yes, indeed, as death left, so judgment will find them; and if any canonization will happily take place respecting them, that must be adjudicated only at the judgment-day; for the Great Judge is not the Judge of the quick only, but of the dead; and if *any* of the dead now wear the crown, and have received the kingdom, methinks, much of the duties of the Judge will be, and has been, abridged, and he will be the Judge of the living only, or of such as shall be found alive at his second coming to judge the whole world. I cannot but think, that it is an error in doctrine to suppose that even the good receive their reward, when the mortal struggle with flesh and blood has terminated. It is cheering to the heart to people heaven with such as we loved and honoured on earth. But it is an assumption which is shivered to atoms, when we reflect in the cooler exercise of the judgment, and on the paroxysms of grief subsiding, that thus to people heaven with the objects of our endearment and veneration, is somewhat, and greatly too, to trench on the Judge's province, who alone can arbitrate in such a matter without partiality, and with justice tempered with mercy, and to whom, in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge *both the quick and dead*, we pray that we may rise to the life immortal, through Him, who liveth and reigneth for ever and ever!

From the above reflections, then, and more particularly from the Scriptures, you will perceive that saint-worship has no authority by which it can be justified. To the worship and reverence with which the memories of departed saints were regarded, are owing many of the corruptions that grew up in the Church, and a "train of error and fraud ensued which ended in the grossest creature-worship." Yet, in its origin, this was natural and salutary. He, whose heart is not excited upon a spot which a martyr has sanctified by his sufferings, or at the grave of one who has largely benefited mankind, must be more inferior to the multitude in the moral, than he can possibly be raised above them in his intellectual, nature. Could the Holy Land be swept clean of its mummeries and superstitions, the thoughts and emotions to be experienced there would be worth a pilgrimage. But it is the condition of humanity, that the best things are those which should most easily be abused. The prayer which was preferred with increased fervency at a martyr's grave, was at length addressed to the martyr himself; virtue was imputed to the remains of his body, the rags of his apparel, even to the instruments of his suffering; relics were required as an essential part of the church furniture; it was decreed that no church should be erected unless some treasures of this kind were deposited within the altar, ~~and~~ so secured there that they could not be taken out without destroying it, it

was made a part of the service to pray through the merits of the saint whose relics were there deposited, and the priest, when he came to this passage, was enjoined to kiss the altar.\*

But upon the various abuses to which it gave occasion, it is not a pleasing, nor a necessary part of my office at present to enlarge, and here with one notice of this practice, to which the Romish communion hath given sanction and countenance, at a very early epoch of the Christian church, I shall draw to a close a discourse, which has been extended to a length much greater than I originally designed; though there are yet some other dogmas of the Papists, which I intended to subject to the test of the Scriptures, and respecting which I have no difficulty whatsoever in saying, they might very easily be proved to have no sanction from the Scriptures to be received as articles of a sound and orthodox Christian church. They are *Purgatory*, *Justification by Works*, the *Refusal of the consecrated wine to the Laity*, and some others of a less consequential nature, and which being not essential to salvation, it is indifferent whether they are observed or not, such as the signing of the cross, &c.: they only become reprehensible when *abused*, or are made to minister to superstition, or are considered as *meritorious* in God's sight, or supersede the performance of the more plain and practical duties of the Divine law. In conducting my examination, I have endeavoured to avoid all intemperate expressions, and all exasperating language; and simply to place in *juxta-position* the tenets held by the Romish church, and the words expressed in the Holy Scriptures; and I trust you will now be able to judge for yourselves on which side the truth lies, and to make your election accordingly. If on the side of the Bible, yield to it the whole assent of the understanding—give to it the whole affections of the heart, and let it be your ambition—the noblest that can warm and animate your bosoms—to *live* by it as a rule of life and doctrine, and become, not so much good Protestants, as good Christians. For we know that there has been made much abuse of that term *good*, and that it is frequently employed as one expressive more of the zeal and bigotry of a sectarian, than of the piety and consistency which should mark and adorn the whole of the temper and conduct of the Christian.

From the historical account which I have given of the primary translation of the Scriptures into the English tongue, and from the reflections in which I have indulged as to the advantages, which it is impossible to estimate too highly, resulting from their translation, from which myriads and myriads of our forefathers derived, and thousands and tens of thousands amongst us are now deriving, all that can impart comfort, encouragement, and support in the pathway to heaven—in travail and trial, in gloom and solitude, in sunshine and light, in clouds and darkness, then am I satisfied that you will concur with me in the conclusion, that the day on which we were so privileged and so blessed, should be a day of most joyful remembrance, and held in veneration and gratitude in this and in every other generation; and that the fourth day of October, not only on this its third centenary, but that ever in each succeeding year it should be commemorated as the first red-letter day of a consistent Protestant! Frequent commemorations of national blessings are due in gratitude; and frequent reviews of a national constitution are necessary in prudence. For these purposes, the deliverance of the Jews from Egyptian bondage, and the pian

\* See Southey's admirable work, "The Book of the Church."

of the Mosaical institutions, were commanded to be read over to the people every seventh year, in the year of release, that they might hear and learn to fear the Lord as long as they lived in the land, whither they went over Jordan to possess it. And it would certainly be dangerous in us to lose sight of the errors and slavery from which we have been delivered, or the truths and liberty to which we have been restored. The human mind is so framed, that it cannot long support itself without something of religion to rest upon ; and if no public care is taken to instruct it in a reasonable one, it will lay hold on any delusion that the first impostor shall recommend. Our licentiousness has already driven multitudes into enthusiasm ; and a conscience plunged into guilt may as readily catch at popery itself. We seem indeed but little apprehensive of danger from that quarter at present ; yet the converts from our church to *popery* are notoriously increasing. The mine, not attended to, is more dangerous than the unmasked battery, which, while it threatens, puts us on our guard ; and experience convinces us, that nominal professors, when unprincipled, may fly for shelter into the very jaws of that superstition which we have *thrice* happily escaped, from a religion to whose power and beauty they were entirely strangers\*.

It is a just reflection, that “we often grow insensible of our blessings, merely from the long and uninterrupted possession of them. And this insensibility usually makes us careless of preserving them, till we are again taught to judge of their value, by their loss. Something of this kind, it is to be feared, is our own case at present with regard to the Reformation. We have possessed that blessing so long, that we have forgot to *enjoy* it. Ignorant of the servitude under which our fathers groaned, we know not how to relish our own deliverance : the deformities of a superstition three hundred years ago are so far out of sight, as to make us less attentive to the beauties of a reasonable service. By these means, we not only reap less pleasure than we might, and produce less fruit than we ought ; but we grow less apprehensive of the tyranny that watches to enslave us, and less zealous to maintain that liberty which our ancestors sacrificed their lives to purchase for us.” In the truth and justice of these reflections, who will not acquiesce, and see in them additional reason for the pious commemoration of this day, and to let it be a kind of gracious remembrancer to stir us up to continued vigilance and wakefulness, lest we should see wrested from us that reasonable service, the maintenance of which in all its original purity and excellence, forms the firmest rampart against infidelity, is the surest bulwark of the throne, the best defence of liberty, and the most impregnable support to pure and undefiled religion. “Be watchful, then, Protestants ! Strengthen, then, Christians ! the things which remain. Remember how you have received, and heard, and hold fast and repent.” Amen.

\* See “Ridley’s Life of Ridley.”

## THE BIBLE THE TREASURY OF KNOWLEDGE.

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REV. A. MAYOR, LL.D.

PARISH CHURCH OF GRAVESEND, KENT, OCTOBER 4, 1835.

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"Search the Scriptures."—JOHN, v. 39.

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ON this day your ministers regard it as a sacred duty, to excite your gratitude to Almighty God for the great blessings of the Reformation, and particularly for that inestimable treasure, a Bible in your native language. By the Protestant churches on the Continent these important events have been celebrated with pious thankfulness each succeeding centenary since their occurrence. Of the public commemoration of these blessed privileges England has hitherto been negligent. In this country the struggle for emancipation from the tyranny and degrading superstitions of Popery was long and arduous. The Reformation was obstructed in its early progress by the infuriate rage of a bigoted queen. Contending for five years against the fire and faggot of a bloody persecution, its motion was apparently retrograde, and its holiest and bravest champions suffered martyrdom at the stake. These circumstances, probably, prevented the English from fixing any precise date as the era of the Reformation of their Church.

On the twenty-first of November, 1834, all the Lutheran churches in Germany, and the Moravians in this country, celebrated, with great solemnity, the third centenary since the publication of the entire Bible in German by Luther. This circumstance has excited the minds of the English Protestants of all denominations, to follow their laudable example.

For a similar blessing we have a precise, definite date. On the fourth of October, 1535, just three hundred years ago this day, was completed the printing of the first entire English Bible, translated by Miles Coverdale. This Bible was dedicated and presented to Henry the Eighth, who, though not half a Protestant, allowed it to be publicly read; and Coverdale was afterwards constituted bishop of Exeter by Edward the Sixth.

But these subjects have been anticipated in the former services of the day; and being unexpectedly called to address you, my intention is an attempt to shew you that the Word of God, the Bible, is an exhaustless store-house of the most invaluable knowledge; a fathomless mine, enclosing the richest gems of philosophy and science; that it contains the fountains of those perennial streams of wisdom, which the sceptic and minute philosopher, with painful toil labour to trace to other sources, and with aching eyes endeavour in vain to discover in other spots; that the Bible communicates to us the know-

ledge of God and of ourselves, of the creation of the world, and the origin of our species ; the history of mankind, and the government of Providence ; the conditions of our existence in the present world, and the certainty and perpetuity of that existence in the world which is to come. From this book we “get understanding,” and it is able to make us “wise unto salvation.” Let me solicit your attention to a few of these subjects.

First, *from the Bible alone we derive all our knowledge of God* ; of the unity of his existence and of the nature of his attributes. That no nation ever attained this knowledge without the aid of divine revelation is a truth, a fact manifested by the voice of universal history, and the existing monuments of antiquity ; and confirmed by the discoveries of all modern voyagers and travellers. A proneness to idolatry is one of the strongest propensities of human nature ; and however problematical the assertion may sound in Christian ears, its veracity has been corroborated by the universal experience of mankind in every age and in every climate. To the constitution of man, religion is as necessary as food and clothing, and rather than be without a god and the exercise of religious rites, he will invest a star, or even a brute animal with the title of deity ; he will manufacture a god, however clumsy, of wood or of stone ; and unconscious of the preposterous absurdity of his folly, will adore the idol of his own manufacture ; will present to it his costly oblations, and adore it with prostrate servility. The practice seems a satire on our common understanding, but in the presence of facts, hypothesis and conjectural theory must be silent. History is loud in its encomiums on the wisdom of ancient Egypt ; yet our pity or our risibility is unavoidably excited when we behold the otherwise wise Egyptians elevating to the rank of deities, not only irrational brute animals, but the plants and herbs of their gardens. A religious system and a worship so derogatory to reason and so degrading to the soul, was too gross for adoption by the more polished Greeks. The theology of Greece assumed a higher tone. That delightful country of heroes and philosophers, of painters and statuaries, of historians and poets, introduced into its theology a motley crowd of gods, and a miscellaneous mob of goddesses, and adorned the bewitching mythological system in the story of their lives, by all the embellishments of oratory and the fascinating charms of poetic song. She created imaginary deities of the hills and gods of the vallies, naiads of the fountains and nereids of the floods ; yet the wisdom of polished Greece could make no distinction between her gods and men but that of greater and less. Her gods were only men on a larger scale : they were invested with all the irregularity and violence of human passions, and polluted by the basest crimes of our degenerate nature. From the lasciviousness and the broils, the rouqueries and the felonies of the gods of Olympus, the man who has the Bible in his hand turns away his eyes with blushes and disgust. Who would wish a father or a brother like her Jupiter or Mercury ? Who would covet a sister or a wife the pattern of her imperious Juno, or her Cyprian queen ?

How simple yet how sublime are the ideas which the Scriptures communicate to us of the existence and attributes of God ! And though our unaided intellectual faculties could not have discovered them, yet, when revealed, they are satisfactory to the most cultivated reason, and congenial to every sentiment of the intelligent soul. The God of the Scriptures is a being without beginning and without end, from everlasting to everlasting ; without passions and without

parts, without locality. He created and governs the world, and his presence pervades the universe. He searches the heart and is acquainted with the thoughts and intentions of the soul. He is nearer to us than we are to ourselves. he will bring every thought into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or evil; he will by no means clear the impenitent guilty; yet "is a God pardoning iniquity, transgression, and sin." "He so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life;" and in his name hath authorized us to call him "our Father who art in heaven."

Such a portrait, reason contemplates with pleasing acquiescence, and in such a presence the soul sinks in humility, lies prostrate, and adores. Without this revelation the world would have remained in gross darkness; ignorant of their Maker and sunk in the most degrading superstition. Without this knowledge, we should, perhaps, at this very hour, have been offering our sacrifices and presenting our blind adoration to some clumsy wooden idol, or worshipping at home the ill-carved images of our household teraphim, our portable penates. Let us then reverence and esteem that Book which has dispelled the darkness of superstition from our mind, and like David let us value it "above thousands of gold and silver."

Secondly, *the Bible teaches the only sound principles of philosophy.* If penned under the superintendence of the Spirit of God, it can contain no doctrines inconsistent with the known laws of nature, or incompatible with any posterior discoveries of genuine science. The Bible was written by many different authors of various characters and ranks in life; distant in residence and at remote periods from each other; and with two exceptions (Moses and Solomon) not one of them remarkable for any literary or scientific attainment, but signal only for sincerity of heart and piety of life. Yet this Book contains no doctrine inconsistent with sound philosophy or contradicted by the multifarious and profound discoveries obtained by the acute and indefatigable researches of modern ingenuity and science.

The books of Moses are the most ancient writings in the world. They were penned at a time when all other nations but the Jews were enslaved by the most absurd idolatry; and, with the exception of Egypt, were sunk in the most ignorant barbarism. These writings treat of a countless variety of subjects: of cosmology, of history, of chronology, and geography; of physiology, zoology, and botany; of national polity, civil jurisprudence, and ethics; of pure religion and the ceremonials of its public solemnization. In so dark a period of the world was it possible for an uninspired individual to treat on such a multitudinous variety of subjects without committing himself—without averring some thing which would be contradicted by future experience, or refuted by posterior discovery? But the foundations of the oracles of God stand sure; and amid the luminous blaze of modern knowledge, the writings of Moses shine pre-eminently bright. Compare his rational, his manly and sublime cosmogony with the Roman mythological metamorphoses, or the atomic generation of the philosophizing Epicureans, though adorned with all the charms of poetry by the genius of an Ovid, and the vivid imagination of a Lucretius; the comparison will exalt the Jew to the dignity of the prophet of God, and sink the heatnen hypotheses to a level with the tales of our nurseries.

Thirdly, *the Bible contains the only authentic history of the earlier ages of*

*the world.* Not to know what happened before thou wast born," says the proverb, "is to be always a child." We find ourselves placed on a theatre where others have acted before us. We are surrounded by monuments of the previous existence and of the labours of our progenitors. Curiosity naturally excites an inquiry into the history of their pedigree and the story of their lives. The Scriptures gratify this curiosity, and reward the inquiry. They exhibit the history of our species for more than four thousand years, from the cradle of its infancy in Paradise, till the advent of the Messiah; and, in prophetic vision, they adumbrate the prominent events of future ages, till the final consummation of all things. With whatever anxiety and care we retrace the current of history, when we ascend the stream of time a few centuries beyond the Christian era, our compass is deranged and our pilot lost; we are driven on an unknown ocean, and enveloped by a dense impervious atmosphere; we are surrounded by a darkness that may be felt, without a star to ascertain our latitude or direct our course. If we apply to the Roman historians for a guide; Rome itself was but of yesterday, and dates her origin but seven centuries and a half before the birth of Christ; and of the earlier parts of that scanty period her annals were lost in the sacking of the city by the barbarian Brennus and his victorious Gauls.

If we turn our aching eyes to the pages of Greece for direction, they present no certainty of light anterior to their calculation by Olympiads, which commenced but 1776 years before the Christian era, or about 23 years before the foundation of Rome. All beyond is involved in the impenetrable cloud of metamorphosis and mystic fable; in the story of her gods and her demigods, of her giants and super-human heroes, in the legend of her golden and her silver age, and the carnal intercourse of her divinities with mortals. It is true the imperishable verses of her matchless poet (Homer) cast a feeble ray on the short period of the Trojan war, like a transient meteor in the midnight sky, which glares for a moment and then disappears, rendering the succeeding darkness still more perceptible; and excepting the Bible, of no other nation and in no other languages, are any authentic vestiges of early history extant. At an early period Egypt was populous, wealthy, and wise; but her hieroglyphics are inscrutable, and her pyramids are but splendid monuments of human vanity. Phoenicia, Tyre, Sidon, and Carthage spread the knowledge of letters and enriched the world with their adventurous navigation and lucrative commerce; but have left no historian to detail their discoveries or record their fame. The populous Nineveh is extinct, without a beam of light to direct posterity to the spot where she stood; the mighty Babylon has sunk, and has left no stone visible of her lofty tower, her hanging gardens, and her impregnable walls. The splendid and extensive ruins of Palmyra and Presepolis throw an awful gloom over the reflecting mind. These broken monuments of human grandeur testify the magnificence of their temples, the splendour of their palaces, and the skill and elegance of their architects; but the song of no bard remains to consecrate the fame of the stately princes who swayed the sceptre in those pompous capitals, or celebrate the exploits of their conquering heroes; and the heads that contrived, and the hands that raised the mighty fabrics, have mouldered in the dust, without an historian to record their names.

To the veracity of the narrative of Moses have been pompously opposed the supposed myriads of years in Chinese chronology, the Indoo institutes, the

Chaldean and Arabian astronomical tables, and the recently discovered planisphere and zodiac of Egypt. That China began to be peopled immediately on the dispersion from Babel, we learn from the testimony of Moses himself, and their own chronology extends not, even in conjecture, beyond the period of their revered ancestor Fohi. But that the Fohi of China and the Noah of the Bible are the same personage, has been clearly proved ; and a proper investigation of their own chronology fully corroborates the fact. When India was less known, we were told with much parade of the antiquity of its nations, of the sublime wisdom, the accurate philosophy, the mild and rational system of their moral and religious institutes. But a more intimate acquaintance with these nations has convinced all Europe that their chronology is fabulous, their philosophy childish, irrational, and absurd, and their religion cruel to its votaries, abhorrent to the finer feelings of the heart, and derogatory to every attribute of God. The wisdom to be collected from the Zendesta of their far-famed Zoroaster has not recompensed the labour of translation ; the rude images of their Juggernaut excite not our veneration, nor do the expiring cries of the murdered widow ; immolated on the funeral pyre of her departed husband, allure the followers of the meek and benevolent Jesus to imitate the bloody ceremonial.

The accuracy of modern astronomy has demonstrated that the most ancient astronomical tables extend not beyond the era of Babylon, and that every statement which anticipates that period, has been formed by retrograde calculations, inaccurately made, and discordant with time. And, finally, a French astronomer of high mathematical attainments, and himself a deist, has scientifically demonstrated that the Egyptian planisphere cannot be dated higher than the sixth or seventh century before the Christian era, nor does he believe that it was ever designed to represent the celestial zodiac.

Thus, without some safer guide than the heathen world can furnish, would mankind be abandoned to the wildness of hypothesis, and the tormenting distraction of discordant conjectures concerning the origin of their species and the length of time which has elapsed since first they were called into being by the voice of their Creator. Amid this oppressive gloom the unsullied blaze of Scripture light directs our steps to the certainty of truth. The holy Scriptures inform us in what place, and at what time, the original man emerged from the plastic hand of his Maker, and his history is traced in a regular succession of lineal descendants, till the peopled world had acquired an advanced degree of civilization, and each separate nation had acquired ability and means to compose the annals of its own history. The successive generations of mankind are recounted, with brief biographical memoirs of their history, from primeval Adam to Noah. The dispersion of the projectors of Babel, and the repeopling of the earth, are recorded in exact detail till the time of Abraham, whom God selected from among his idolatrous contemporaries as the depository of his revealed will to man. The numerous posterity of this faithful patriarch pass in review before us, sometimes in their individual and sometimes in their aggregate capacity, and in connexion with the other nations of the earth, till they obtained the splendours of royalty in the person of Saul, of David, and of Solomon, and his successors, till the time of their captivity to Babylon, and thence through the variety of their chequered fate till the coming of Christ, and their final dispersion among the nations of the earth.

Fourthly, *And why* (it may be asked) *this apparently anxious care of Divine Providence for the information of man?* To convince us that Jesus Christ is the Saviour promised to the first offender in Paradise ; that he is the seed of Abraham, in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed ; that he is the root and the Offspring of David, to sit upon his throne, and of whose kingdom there shall be no end. To Him give all the Prophets witness, and by His merits the whole world has been preserved. To convince mankind that he is the only Saviour, and that there is salvation in no other name. To convince us, by the subversion of the throne of David, and the universal dispersion of the posterity of Abraham, that the promised Shiloh, that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh ; that the law and the Prophets are accomplished in Him ; that the spirit of prophecy has performed its office and is withdrawn ; and that vain must be the expectation of a future Messiah. A future Messiah would require a new Bible, for all the prophecies and types concerning the Messiah in the present Scriptures have been fully accomplished in Jesus of Nazareth.

Finally, to describe and to proclaim a Saviour for lost man, is the purpose for which divine revelation was communicated. For this the royal Psalmist strung his harp ; for this Isaiah tuned his lyre ; for this the Prophets wrote and spoke, from Enoch to John the Baptist. Man cannot by searching find out God ; he does not know himself ; of his own immortality he can form only unsatisfactory conjectures ; of a future and invisible world, he is in total darkness, and is ignorant whether there is or will be such a world. In this awful dilemma the Bible comes to our aid, withdraws the curtain which hid from our view the spiritual world, and eternity

“Bursts on our vision in a flood of day,”

for “ life and immortality are brought to light by the Gospel.”

Man feels within him passions, propensities inimical to his peace, whose indulgence would disturb the order of society. The voice of his natural conscience tells him that he has done wrong, that he is a sinner ; his reason tells him that right and wrong cannot be confounded, that vice must be punished. He looks abroad on the creation around him, he every where beholds vestiges of the power, the wisdom, and even the goodness of God. But where shall he look for his mercy ? Where shall he look for a token that the great God of the universe will pardon a guilty, insignificant creature, who has violated his commands, rejected, spurned his government, and introduced disorder into his fair creation ? Shall he look for proofs of this mercy in the tornado and the earthquake, the pestilence and the deluge ? “ The soul that sinneth shall die ;” and he must be a hardened wretch who has never been conscious of the sentence of death within himself. In this astounding and “ fearful looking for judgment and fiery indignation, which is ready to devour the wicked,” we hear a voice in the authenticated Gospel exclaim, “ Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world : ” “ If any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins : ” “ He bore our sins in his own body on the tree : ” “ Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.”

And on what severe conditions is this pardon of sins, this oblivion of guilt, offered to the culprit ? Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth ! Simply on condition that he will lay down the weapons of his rebellion, penitently acknowledge his guilt, with grateful faith accept the proffered atonement, and

"go and sin no more." And must this "good news" from heaven, whose authenticity is evinced by the supernatural powers of the ambassadors who report it, be obstructed in its progress to our ears, and concealed from our eyes, and locked up in the Vatican at Rome? Let us

"Praise God from whom all blessings flow,"

that by his blessed providence he liberated his imprisoned word of life. You possess the "lively oracles" in your own language. You have the Bible in your churches and in your homes;

"Read it by day, and study it by night:"

treasure it in your hearts and exemplify its holy precepts in your lives. Remember, the privilege of possessing it was purchased by the blood of your ancestors: and may the God of all grace make you partakers of its exceeding great and precious promises in this life and in that which is to come, through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour.

## THE DUTY OF PRAYER.

"It was the injunction of the Saviour, that men 'ought always to pray.' It was the charge of the Apostle, 'In every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your request be made known unto God.' For, you will also mark, there is a suggestion furnished relative to the parts of prayer: we are to present supplications for the mercies that we need—prayer that we may be delivered from the evils to which we are exposed—intercessions by which we are to express the exigences and sorrows of others, that the one may be relieved, and the other supplied—and giving of thanks for the blessings we possess, and for the deliverances effected for us by the mighty power of God. Then we are reminded that our intercessions and prayers are to be made for all our brethren and mankind. You say, Yes, the poor and the afflicted need the prayers of the righteous, that their penury may be relieved, and that they may be solaced and consoled under their trials: but the rich and the great require them not. Why, my friends, the rich and the great require them most of all, because they are placed in circumstances of exaltation, and are therefore in imminent peril. Tall oaks, and cedars of the forest and the mountains of Lybanus, are more likely to be struck by the lightning than the shrubs. The turrets that are upon the top of the castle are more likely to suffer from the severe blast of the storm than the lowly cottage. Kings, and those in authority, princes and potentates, are exposed to peculiar cares, and difficulties, and trials; and if they err too, they err not alone, but lead many into evil by their bad sentiments, or by their example. Therefore, says the Apostle, 'I will that, first of all, supplications and prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks, be made for all men.' Yes, prayers benevolent and catholic. When we are bending our knees before God, and expressing our desires for our fellow-creatures, our better affections flow forth toward them who are around us, and who bear the same nature with ourselves, and therefore we feel disposed to plead for the idolatrous, and the superstitious, and the deluded: yes, for Jews, Turks, and infidels, however they may differ from us, whether in theology or in secular policy, in the sciences or arts that prevail in society at large. 'I exhort, therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men; for kings, and all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.' For they are the compensatory advantages of prayer: it will tend to promote peace in society; it will secure the approbation—not in the way of merit—the approbation of our Lord: 'for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour.' It will bring us into a near resemblance of that benevolent Being whose name is love, whose heart is tenderness, who delights in mercy—'God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth'"—REV. J. CLAYTON.

## THE CHARACTER AND CONVERSION OF SAUL OF TARSUS

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REV. J. SHERMAN,

SURREY CHAPEL, OCTOBER 25, 1835.

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" Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting."—**1 TIMOTHY, i. 16.**

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JUDGMENT and mercy, my brethren, are to be our songs in the house of our pilgrimage ; and judgment and mercy are the chief subjects of God's Word. In one page of that Word we read of God's destroying the world with a deluge—in the other, of saving Noah and eight persons in the ark. In one page we read of his giving up the nations of the earth to the basest idolatry—in the other, of his calling Abraham from Ur of the Chaldees, and bidding him separate himself in mercy from them. In one page we read of his destroying the cities of the plain, and the inhabitants with them—in the other, of his rescuing Lot and his family, lest he should be devoured in the coming devastation. In one we read of his drowning the Egyptians in the Red Sea, though they cried aloud for help—in the other, his allowing Israel to pass through the Red Sea upon dry land, and distinguishing them with his approving smile and blessing. In the one, we read of his sending Judas " to his own place"—in the other, of his pardoning Peter who denied him with oaths and curses. In the one, we read of his giving up one of the thieves, who hung by his side, to utter impenitence and hardness of heart, and plucking the other as a brand from the burning, in the last moments of existence. In the one, we read of his smiting Ananias and Sapphira dead with a lie in their mouths—in the other, of his converting Saul of Tarsus while in the very act of persecuting him and his disciples.

What shall we say to these things, my brethren ? When we walk through the fields of Scripture, every where we see these monuments erected by the road-side for our observation ; and not without a gracious end. God's wisdom and love are surprisingly manifest in these portions of Holy Writ, and in thus setting before us judgment and mercy. Some are monuments of his wrath, to alarm, arouse, and convict the impenitent, hardened, and profligate sinner ; while others are monuments of his grace, his free mercy, and his sovereign love, to show how boundless it is in its extent, and to animate penitent sinners to come to the same source from whence these individuals obtained so large a share.

The Apostle tells us, that his conversion was " a pattern to them who should hereafter believe on Christ to life everlasting." Many individuals read the Word of God, and peruse the account of Saul's conversion as a pleasing story

as an interesting event recorded in Scripture : but that is not merely the aim and end of it ; it was “ a pattern to all them who should hereafter believe to life everlasting.” It is one of the devices of Satan to keep souls from Jesus Christ, by telling them that their sins are past hope, that they must needs despair, for they are of a peculiar nature ; that mercy may extend to some individuals, but it cannot extend to them ; that the promises of God are for distinct parties who are specially named, but that they have not the qualifications that are necessary to those promises, and therefore the promises are not with them. O, what multitudes of souls has the enemy of mankind kept from peace and rest by these delusions ! Is he trying any spirit with this description of temptation to-night ? Is there any one supposing that his sins are too peculiar and too aggravated to find mercy ? I call upon him now to look at the peculiar case presented, at the specimen of the divine workmanship here brought to his view. It is to be held up to-night as “ a pattern,” to show the vast and boundless extent of the grace of God in the conversion of the sinner, and the plenitude of the mercy of Christ in its extending to the utmost bounds of a sinner’s guilt. Those of us who have believed through grace, ought to find our minds refreshed by looking at these patterns which God has set up in his Word. In cases of backsliding, in cases where the heart has wandered from God, in cases where we find we are not making progress, in cases where our hearts condemn us—O how refreshing, how reviving, how animating, free grace in Christ exemplified in such patterns as Peter and Saul ! May we be refreshed and animated to-night while we look at the pattern here exhibited to our view !

Let me call your attention to three points that seem presented in the words of the text : the sinfulness of Saul’s life before his conversion ; the free grace of Christ in his conversion ; and the design of Christ by his conversion.

Let me direct your attention to THE SINFULNESS OF SAUL’S LIFE BEFORE HIS CONVERSION. And what a sinner was Saul of Tarsus ! He was such in his own eyes, that he said, “ I am the chief : ” and certainly in the description which he has given of his own life, and the manifestation of his impious mind, previous to his conversion, he may be called a prince among sinners, one of the chief monuments of divine grace and mercy. And when we look at these points as presented in the thirteenth verse—“ Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious ”—we shall certainly say he was one of the chief of sinners. Observe then that he had four distinct characteristics : he was a horrid blasphemer, a furious persecutor, an injurious neighbour, a proud Pharisee : and yet he obtained mercy.

The first point in his character was, that he was *a horrid blasphemer*. “ I verily thought,” he says, “ that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth ; which things I also did in Jerusalem.” His name was like poison to his very soul ; he never spoke of him but with the most daring impiety ; he would never examine the evidences of his mission, never look to the prophecies of olden time, never examine the types which the prophets represent and set forth of the great Messiah who was hereafter to come : but he took it for granted that he was an impostor, and he treated him as such. He was a man of great learning, and he turned all his learning to molest his Saviour, to degrade his Saviour, to despise his Saviour. He insulted him and his disciples, and as far as lay in him he was determined that the name

of Christ should never be known in the world, but as a name of execration fit only for the mouths of swearers and blasphemers. This was his determination. Are there any such present? Are there any swearers present—any blasphemers, any impious youths present? Behold your pattern in Saul of Tarsus.

He was a *furious persecutor* as well as a blasphemer. Whoever professed the name of Jesus Christ was the object of his inveterate rage. If any man were a thief, that were a small matter; if any man were a drunkard, that was an insignificant concern; if he was an idolater, or a swearer, or every thing that was vile, that was comparatively of little moment; that only introduced the man to the magistrate to be blamed or to be fined. But if he was a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ, that was the grand badge of infamy in his estimation, and deserving of the severest punishment. But let us trace the gross features in his character as a persecutor, in order to discover the strength of his enmity to Jesus Christ and his disciples.

He tells us in the *first* place, that he was “exceedingly mad against them.” And in Acts, ix. 1, there is a peculiar phrase used: “Saul yet *breathing out* threatenings and slaughter.” You have seen a man in a great passion; the passion affects his breathing, so that he *breathes out* his words; he cannot utter them with that coolness, and conciseness, and readiness, which he does when he is quite free from passion; but he *breathes* them out; it seems to affect all his powers. This is the exact metaphor used in the words of the passage—“breathing out.” He was “exceedingly mad against them:” not only angry, but *mad*; and not only mad, but *exceedingly* mad.

*Secondly*, he threatened them with “slaughter.” His tongue was a servant which he employed in the devil’s service to a vast extent; he used the most desperate threats to these poor individuals, these lamb-like persons, of confiscation, of imprisonment, and even of slaughter.

*Thirdly*, he “compelled them to blaspheme.” And methinks this is the cream of his defilement, that he was not content to be an infidel himself, that he was not content to degrade Christ himself, but he made this the price of being let loose from his grasp, that they should deny Christ, that they should forswear Christ, that they should give up Christ, and that they should sever themselves for ever from Christ.

Again, he “haled men and women to prison:” not only men but *women*. Their sex might have excused them and pleaded for pity; but that was nothing to him; women were no more regarded than men: his bowels were shut against the mother with the child at her bosom; she might plead them—it was of no use; “he would hale them to prison;” and the only support of the mother’s existence, and the only comfort she had—it mattered not to him; the aged and the young were to him both alike; the infant was torn from the mother’s bosom, and the mother from the infant—the husband from the wife, and the wife from the husband—the sister from the brother, and the brother from the sister—all these were separated for the sake of gratifying his furious persecuting spirit; torn from their home, their business, and their connexions, they were accounted as criminals, and haled by force to prison.

Look at another point of his character: “many of the saints did he shut up in prison;” not one family, but many, numbers; all within his own reach or power—he not only took them before the magistrates, but “shut them up in prison;” he took upon him the power of an officer of *state*, and locked them

up, and fettered them in dark and loathsome dungeons. And mark what he also tells us in Acts, xxvi; he was not content with his rage exerting itself in Jerusalem, but he persecuted them “even unto strange cities.” He extended this madness of persecution not only to Jerusalem and its suburbs, but to strange cities, cities that he had no connexion with, and among whose inhabitants he had no need to go; only if there was a saint there, if there was one who named the name of Jesus there, that would bring him to that city.

Then the *sixth* feature is that he “caused them to be put to death,” and triumphed over them in their sufferings. This we read in Acts, xxvi. 10: “When they were put to death, I gave my voice against them.” We are told that, when the murderers of Stephen took off their clothes that they might throw the stones at the martyr with more vigour, and exert the muscles of their arm with greater power, they “laid down their clothes at a young man’s feet, whose name was Saul.” He gloated and gloried in the blood of Christ’s first and happy martyr. This was the character of Saul previous to his conversion.

I do not know whether there is a persecutor present; of course I could not suppose that there is such a persecutor as Saul was. God be thanked that in happy Britain the government of the country would not allow it, or else the *spirit*, in numbers, is the same. But I refer to that man whose wife has just began to be serious: he does not take a razor and cut her throat; he does not shoot her with a pistol; he does not drag her before the magistrate; but every thing that can embitter her life, every thing that can tease and vex her spirit, every thing that can cross and aggravate her temper—this he does; and in this manner he persecutes her because she prays for him, because she loves Christ, and serves him, and delights in his service. Art thou here, O man? Look at the spirit of the individual whom I present before you this evening, and see yourself, and hate yourself, while you look at it.

He was not only a furious persecutor, but he was *an injurious neighbour*. He himself tells us this: “Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and *injurious*?” that is, he never did any real good; that is, he never sought God’s glory, or his fellow creatures’ true happiness: he would not only not enter in himself, but he would not let others enter in. How many widows did this man make! How many orphans did he make! How many hearts did he break! How much poverty did he occasion! What property was laid hold of by him for the treasury of the Sanhedrim! And what cruelties were inflicted by him! How much piety did he banish, and how many sleepless nights did he cause!

There was another point in his character: he was *a proud Pharisee*. This may appear light to some, but this was the crown of his character, this is the greatness of his guilt; this is (if I may use the expression) his scarlet and his crimson sin—that he went about to set up and establish his own righteousness, not submitting himself to the righteousness of God. “Publicans and harlots,” says our Saviour, “enter into the kingdom of heaven before them.” Why? Because when the Gospel was preached to publicans and harlots, self-convicted and condemned, they laid hold of the remedy, and saw it appropriate to them: but this man rejected the all-sufficient and imputed righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, as a ground of hope, and prided himself on his ability to save his soul from God’s wrath, and to enter heaven by his own merits and his own works.

Now there are many individuals who are similar to Saul. We hear numbers say, "I am not a liar; I am not a drunkard; I pay my way; I live respectably in the world, and endeavour to train up my children respectably; and if I don't go to heaven who ought to go?" And where is Christ, and where is the Saviour of sinners? "Yes, but then," you say, "I know I have done wrong in many things; we are all guilty in some respects: but then I have never been a *great* sinner, and I do hope that if I do as well as I can, the Lord Jesus Christ will help me, and give me some of his merit, that I may die in peace." Now this, though not uttered in such plain and direct language, is often implied, and is the meaning of thousands of sinners. If there are such characters as Saul here, let me tell you that if you are attempting to get to heaven by your own works, and rejecting the mediation and righteousness of your Lord Jesus Christ as the entire ground of your hope, and as the foundation of your righteousness before God, a greater sin you never can commit; it is the greatest of all transgressions. Drunkenness and swearing, and many of the vilest sins of mankind, are great sins, and sins which bring down on the heads of the transgressor the just judgment of God; but let it be remembered, these are only sins against the justice and holiness of the law; but the rejection of Christ and his salvation are sins against the bounty and grace of the Gospel.

I have thus endeavoured to exhibit the character of Saul before his conversion: let me pass on to notice THE FREE GRACE OF CHRIST EXHIBITED IN HIS CONVERSION. And was such a sinner converted? Did free grace render such a rebel a willing subject? O the marvellous power, and patience, and love, of Jesus Christ! Here was a rugged, knotty piece of timber, hewn by his gracious hand into a vessel of mercy, and made meet to praise him through all eternity.

Perceive, my brethren, how his conversion was effected by Christ. Imagine yourselves in Jerusalem a few minutes, and see Saul just as he is setting out on his journey to Damascus, for the sake of persecuting the poor saints in that city. See him mount his horse; see the numbers around him—what a splendid guard the man has. Look at the Sanhedrim, the chief priests and the great men of his nation coming to him, shaking hands with him, and saying, "God speed your way, and give you the success of your mission:" look how the people are congratulating him all around. See the poor saints trembling. "Now," they say, "I fear for the safety of my sister, who has gone to Damascus. Now is my dear friend who lives in that city about to be butchered by this furious tyrant." See the people all running to John Mark's house, to engage in prayer, and bring down the blessing of heaven, that this man may be stopped in his persecution; and going home to write letters, to prevent, if possible, the danger to which some of their friends and relations will be subject by this man's arrival. Never man mounted a horse with such assurance of the success of his journey as did Saul of Tarsus; and no man ever went with greater joy than when he took from the hands of the chief priests the mandamus, and put it into his pocket, the authority to hale men and women to prison. Never man thought himself more secure; never man thought he was going on a more virtuous embassy: and he had pretty nearly reached Damascus, he was within sight of the gates, and within a stone's-throw of the city; and just as he was going forward, and some of the saints perhaps looking out of the windows, seeing him advancing, and trembling for fear of his entry—just as he approached the

gate, the Lord Jesus opened a window in heaven, and let one single ray of his glory fall down from heaven upon him. It struck him to the ground ; the guard and himself were all fallen to the earth, while a voice said, in tones such as he had never heard before, " Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me ? Give a reason for thy conduct ? Have I ever injured thee ? Have I ever done thee any wrong ? Why persecutest thou me ?" He immediately replied, " Who art thou, Lord ?" And the voice again answered in the Hebrew tongue, with which he was familiar, " I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." " Lord," said the man, " what wilt thou have me to do ?" " Go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou oughtest to do." And he went with his guards—how different a man from what he was just before !

This was the manner of his conversion : now let us see what effect did his conversion produce ? What effect did it produce on *the spot* ? It turned proud Saul into humble Paul : he that was raging with madness against the disciples, was now trembling and astonished for himself ; he that blasphemed Christ as an impostor, now calls upon him as Lord ; he that was a wolf seeking his prey, was now a harmless lamb seeking covert in the house of some Christian friend.

See what it did for him *the three days afterwards*. The light that came from heaven had taken away his natural sight, but how it had illuminated his mind. How great his anguish now he saw his past life ! " Come see a man who told me *all things* that ever I did." This ray of light had brought up sins that he had forgotten—sins of his early days, of which he thought nothing. All the ghosts of the murdered saints presented themselves to his recollection, and demanded satisfaction for their blood : all the prisons into which he had put them, now appeared as dungeons too good for him : all the orphans, and childless fathers and mothers, and husbands and wives whom he had bereaved, now rise up before him, and ask him how he could bereave them so. And when he thought of Christ, and his conduct to Christ, he tells us he was in such anguish that he did neither eat nor drink for three whole days. What did he ? The Lord Jesus shall be his witness what he did : " Go," said he to Ananias, " into Straight-street, into the house of Judas who lives in that street, and inquire for one Saul of Tarsus : for behold he prayeth, and hath seen thee in a vision putting thine hand on him, that he might receive his sight." " I go," said Ananias, " to Saul of Tarsus ? Why I have just heard that this man has been persecuting the saints, and has come hither with authority from the chief priests to murder and destroy thy saints here ; and I go to him !" " Go thy way," said the Saviour : " dost thou question my power ? Dost thou suppose that this arch-rebel of the kingdom of Satan is too great for my power to subdue, or too sinful for my grace to arrest ? Go thy way, and release him from his bondage of darkness, and give him the joys of my salvation, for he is a chosen vessel unto me." And he went ; and when he entered, instructed previously by the Saviour, he said, " The Lord Jesus, who appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, has sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost." And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales : and he received sight forthwith : and he arose ; and he that had baptized others with blood, was now baptized with water, professed and put on the discipleship of the Lord Jesus. O the grace that could soften such a heart, and melt such a mind !

But see what his conversion did for him *in after days*. We have seen it at

the spot, and we have seen it during the three days he was locked up in Judas's house : but what did it produce in *after life* ? " Immediately, ' says, he, " I conferred not with flesh and blood. I went not down to Tarsus, to ask my father and mother what I should then do : I went not to the chief priests, to ask if they would keep me a seat in the Sanhedrim, if I ventured thus to go forth. No, I did not confer with man ; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood, but preached Christ among the Gentiles as the Author of salvation and the God of grace." " Straightway," says the historian in the Acts—" Straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God." Paul received a commission for this purpose when he was converted to Christ. And here mark, there was not only grace to make him a *Christian*, but there was grace to make him a *minister* : he was not only taken from the world as the church are, but he was taken from the church as Aaron was, and made a minister of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And now let us see him in his ministry. What was the subject of it ? " I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." And he went, and preached boldly before kings, and rulers, and magistrates, and assemblies of different classes, the glories of his Saviour, and the triumphs of his grace. O the labours of this man ! O the prayers of this man ! O the zeal of this man ! O the melting pity of this man over lost souls ! O the compassion and tenderness of his heart ! Could any one believe, unless the Word of God recorded it, that that is the same man who " breathed out threatenings and slaughter" against the saints, who could now say, " And so being affectionately desirous of you, we were not only willing to have imparted unto you, not the Gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because you were dear unto us." " I have cherished you, and nourished you," he says, " as a nurse cherishes her children." O the subjugating power of divine grace, and the influence of divine love !

But it is time I exhibit, in the last place, THE DESIGN OF CHRIST IN HIS CONVERSION. I know not which to admire most, the sovereignty and grace of Christ in *converting* him, or the sovereignty and grace of Christ in exhibiting his conversion as a *pattern* to others, as an example from which they might take encouragement as long as time should last.

Now you are to see in this pattern four things : God help you to register them in your hearts, and to live under the influence of them. You are to see, first, the infinite merit of Christ's death, a pattern ; secondly, the unquestionable willingness of Christ's heart ; thirdly, the great design of Christ's Gospel ; and, fourthly, the renovating power of Christ's grace.

Here is the *pattern of the infinite merit of Christ's death*. The atonement of Christ reaches back to the first sin, and extends itself to the last : " He was made sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Now the merit of that atonement is imputed to all that believe ; his righteousness is " unto all and upon all them that believe." His merits extend infinitely beyond our iniquities ; and clothed in the robe of his righteousness, persecuting infidels and wretches of the worst description are so pure, so holy, so just, so innocent, in the estimation of the Deity, that he himself cannot see a sin-spot in them. Sinners, what mean you by saying that your sins are too great for Christ to pardon ? Sinners ! what mean you, to derogate from

the merit of the Son of God? What! shall the sins of a finite mortal extend beyond the power of Christ's infinite atonement? What! shall the aggravated enormities of the sinner go beyond the power of God the Saviour? Is it possible? "He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him." Here is your encouragement.

Secondly, *the unquestionable willingness of Christ's heart.* Despair not, my beloved hearer. Do you faint? Are you a broken-hearted sinner? Are you sensible of your guilt and your danger? Have you pondered over in private the enormities of your past life, and are you seeking for mercy? Then see this pattern, dear hearers. Were you to have ten thousand times more desires than you now possess in your heart to be saved, you could not reach a ten thousand times ten thousandth part of Christ's willingness to save. O that you would consider this! Suppose an individual in a similar disease to yourself were to go to a physician, and to be healed, and that individual were to return to you, and say, "My friend, I have been to the doctor, and by God's goodness he has healed me of my disease; he has cured me, and I am now as well in health as I ever was in my life: I advise you to go to him." "But," say you, "what warrant have I to believe that he will receive me if I go, or that he will give me the medicine?" "*This warrant—not only that he has cured me, but that he has invited you to come.*" Now what individual labouring under bodily disease would not go to this physician? The man whom he has cured is the pattern of his power, the exhibition of his skill: and here is a pattern exhibited to you of the unquestionable willingness of Christ's heart to receive you. When Satan tempts you, "Can such a wretch as you hope for mercy?" look at your pattern. When he says, "Your sins are too extensive and too vile," look at your pattern. When he says, "Bring forward an instance where a sinner has ever been saved, such as you," bring forward your pattern and say, "Get thee behind me, Satan; there is infinitely more willingness in Christ's heart than there is in me." It is your unwillingness, not his.

You here see *the great design of Christ's Gospel.* Why is the Gospel published? This is the pattern. To show you the great design of Christ's Gospel—that is to encourage the souls of sinners to come to him and be saved. It contains multiplied instances of his grace and power, that no heart might be discouraged, that no soul might despair. And what were they written for? They were written that we might believe; and if we do but believe—that is, rest upon the fulness of the grace and power exhibited in the Saviour—depend upon it, dear hearers, then the end of the Gospel is accomplished, then the spirit is drawn to him; God is glorified, and you are saved.

Again: look here and see the pattern of *the renovating power of Christ's grace.* O how it changes the hearts and lives of sinners! In one of my village stations, a little time ago, I looked in at a cottage, and inquired of a poor woman there how things were going with herself and her family: she said, "O sir, I have more reason to bless God for the Gospel than I can tell you. When we first came to this cottage both my husband and myself were drunkards, our children were but barely clothed, and every thing we had in the world was marked by the extremest poverty and misery: but now, instead of that, the Lord laid hold of my husband's heart first, then he was pleased to convert me by the preaching at the place of worship; and now the children are

blessed, and I am blessed, and we are all happy together." And now you will see her one of the most respectable women in the village, with a little money in the savings' bank : on the Sunday all the children are catechised, and the husband delights to read and pray with his wife and children. Is not this an exhibition of the renovating power of Christ's grace ? And this is not a solitary instance ; you yourselves know instances like this in the neighbourhoods wherein you reside, where Christ's renovating power has been manifested.

Brethren, you are to look at this for a pattern, if you are ever downcast for any individual. Here see what the power of Christ's grace can do. In the first place, corruption has a power over the individual, and makes him a blasphemer, a persecutor, injurious, and a Pharisee : and now the grace that has renovated his heart makes him an humble seeker of the Saviour, a zealous disciple of Christ, an anxious neighbour, desirous of the good of others, and pondering the way to heaven, and walking in it.

To conclude : if this is the pattern which is here presented to our view as an example to us, who "should hereafter believe to life everlasting," let me just say, that it teaches us two things—that we are not to despair of the conversion of any, nor to presume on the grace of Christ.

It teaches us *not to despair of the conversion of any*. Sometimes thy heart is almost cast down, almost given up to despair, about thy husband, about thy wife, about thy friend, about thy child. Never despair ; this is the pattern that is to teach thee not to despair. That grace has reached, and that grace has conquered, the foulest sinner on the earth ; and, therefore, what you have to do is chiefly this—to bring these individuals under the sound of the Gospel, to awaken their attention to hearing the truths of Christ's word, and to endeavour as much as possible to pray with them and for them. Augustine tells us, that when any body reproved him for his sins, he could withstand that ; but when his mother took him aside and prayed for him, and read him a chapter from the Word of God, and exhorted him to believe it, it broke his heart, he could not withstand that ; he was obliged to retire to get rid of the effects which such a holy teaching produced. I say, despair not of the conversion of any, but, at the same time, use every means to bring every sinner into the house of God.

It may be, some are saying, while I have been preaching, "Well, I see that Christ's grace can convert, and, therefore, if I sit still, he will convert me ; I have no occasion to trouble myself about my salvation." And do you expect to be miraculously converted, my fellow-sinner ? The cause of Saul was an extraordinary and sovereign operation of grace : you may just as well expect to be caught up, as he was, into the third heaven. No sinner ever enjoys the blessedness of Christ's redemption, but in the same way that Paul did ; he believed, he rested on the merit of Christ, and he was saved ; he embraced the welcome news of the Gospel, and he was saved. Therefore, O my hearers, *presume not*. And presume not as to time : a friend who would have been worshipping with us this day, is kept at home on account of an aged parent being burnt to death. I mentioned this in the morning ; I mention it again this evening, to show that, to both aged and young, accidents frequently happen to hurry an individual to eternity ere he is aware. If this should be your present condition, I merely ask of you, Where will you go ? What will become of

your poor souls? Are you ready to meet your Judge? And if you are not ready to meet your Judge, how will you stand before him? Condemned, abashed, and confounded. O give me your hand, to-night, dear young man, dear young woman, and let me lead you into the presence chamber of the King of kings: go, bow down to him, and say, "I have been a rebel all my life; now, Lord, pardon me: I have been a despiser of my Saviour, and a neglecter of his salvation all my days; now, Lord, make me receive it to life everlasting."

I have now done: I may never preach to you more: I am now taking my farewell of this congregation; and the sermon which you have heard to-night shall bear me witness that these garments are pure of your blood. I have warned, I have exhorted, I have presented a Saviour before you, I have told you of the riches of his grace, I have exhorted you to come to him. What have been the imperfections of the representations I am fully aware; but, O sinners, there is truth in them, there is eternal truth in them; and if you perish in your obstinacy, they will be a millstone about your neck, to sink you to the lowest hell. And must this voice witness against you at the last day? Shall I never see you again till we come to the judgment; and then must I bear witness against you? Would it not, do you think, rejoice my heart more, and would it not be infinitely more beneficial to you, for me to say of you, "Here am I, and the children whom thou hast given me?" I can conceive nothing more distracting to a minister's feeling, even now, than to suppose that that countenance which he has repeatedly seen before him in the house of prayer, he should see in the judgment, and that on the head of that individual he must see poured the vials of wrath, while he clasps his hands and says, "Just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!" Time is short, eternity is approaching; and now, or perhaps never, is your opportunity. Behold *now* is the accepted time; *to-day* is the day of salvation.

## THE TEMPTATION OF CHRIST.

THE first attempt which the adversary made on the virtue of our blessed Lord was by an artful and forcible appeal to his natural appetites, at a time when they were more than usually sharpened and increased by circumstances. During his miraculous fast of forty days, Christ had been miraculously supported from above ; the common feelings of nature had been subdued, and they were relieved from all the misery which humanity experiences from the want of food. But " he was afterwards an hungered." The superior power which had overruled the general laws of the material frame was suddenly withdrawn ; the sense of his bodily appetites as suddenly returned ; and would of course be more severely felt from the immediate transition, than they could possibly have been by any gradually increasing appetite. The fierceness of opposite extremes it is difficult in every instance to bear ; but where those extremes are made yet more fierce by the rapidity of a total change, the weakness of mortality must always necessarily sink under the trial. Yet the quickness of vicissitude from satiety to want did not form the only aggravation of our Saviour's sufferings and hunger. He was in the midst of the wilderness—far distant from all the ordinary means of sustenance—he was without a vestige of cultivation to gladden the eye, and with a body so worn out with fasting and prayer, that the life and strength he did possess would have failed him before he could have reached a human dwelling. And surrounded as he was by the wild beasts of the forest, their terrors were sufficient to drive away every friendly footstep, and tear from him the last gleam of comfort, and deprive him of the possibility of any assistance which might have been afforded by any passing traveller.

He was oppressed by hunger, his body was bending with weakness, he was destitute of God, and he was hopeless of relief. At this dangerous moment, and under these unfavourable circumstances, when the courage of the boldest might have shrunk, and the confidence of the most faithful might have been shaken ; the tempter approached, and said, " *If thou be the Son of God, command these stones to be made bread.*"

The peculiar force of the temptation, lies in the application it makes to Jesus under the character of the Messiah, and the great and manifest advantages which would have been the result of so small and trivial a deviation from duty ;—a deviation which to a mind less endowed with wisdom and rectitude, would scarcely have appeared a transgression at all. For a voice from heaven had declared this peasant of Galilee to be the beloved of God, and the contest within him bore testimony to the truth of the declaration. Prophecy had revealed that this beloved of God should come to preach the Gospel to the poor, and establish a kingdom of righteousness on earth. All these bounties, however, seem now about to be lost to the world by the death of him in whose person they were to be accomplished, who was in the extremity of want without the prospect of supply. " *If thou be the Son of God,*" then said the devil—with an air of affected doubt, with a view to work on the feelings of our Lord—" *if thou be the Christ, and dost indeed wish to fulfil those gracious purposes the Almighty intends to perform by thy ministry, exert that power committed to thee as Christ, and preserve by a miracle that life which is to be given for man.*" The temptation was undoubtedly strong, and sought to remove the supernatural aid which had hitherto supported our Saviour in the days of his fasting ; and it would have seemed to a common understanding, to intimate

that he was left to the discretion of his own will, and that he might innocently employ for the important object of his own preservation, the power with which he was intrusted by God. The temptation was strong, but the answer to it was just. "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Jesus knew that all he possessed, he possessed for the welfare of others; that his miracles were never to be directed to the gratification of his own personal desires, or his own bodily necessities, but only to alleviate the wants and sorrows of his brethren: and so rigidly did he adhere to this rule in his conduct, that we find him not in any one instance partaking of the food which he created for others. When he fed the five thousand with a few loaves, he blessed the bread, and brake and gave it to his disciples, and they distributed it to the multitude: he then commanded them to gather up the fragments that remained, that nothing might be lost; and then he himself retired to solitude and prayer. Our Lord reflected also, that if the God of truth had promised to work such great things by his hands, he would protect his servant in all his dangers, and safely lead him to the performance of those promises. What God hath said, that God will himself accomplish. Such was, therefore, the substance of our Lord's answer, and had he yielded to the counsel of Satan, it would have implied either a doubt of the will, or a distrust of the word, or a diffidence of the power, of the Almighty to save him.

That which is stated to us as the *second* temptation of our Lord, is founded upon the answer by which he resisted so triumphantly the first.—"Then the devil taketh him into the holy city and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, and saith to him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down:"—if thou hast such a firm reliance on the word of God, that thou wilt not work a miracle for thy salvation when no human hope is presented to thee—if thou still maintainest a sense of thy danger, and of the dignity of Christ, and such entire reliance on the promises of God—think still further on those promises, trust your life entirely to his care; for it is written in that Word on which you so strongly rely, "He shall give his angels charge over thee to keep thee; and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone." "Here," said the tempter, "is a promise unequivocal, the words are without obscurity, and the protection perfect and universal. He shall give his angels charge over you; nothing therefore can destroy you; he will give them charge not only once, but every where—not only to snatch thee from destruction, but even to guard thee against the slightest injury, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone." No artifice could have produced a passage more simple in its terms, more suitable to the purpose, or more admirably calculated to betray a common understanding, or a weaker faith. When he considered, too, that all the citizens of Jerusalem were worshipping in this temple from whence he was to cast himself down—that they were all looking, not only for the consolation of Israel, but expecting him to descend in visible glory with a host of holy angels in his train from heaven—and that Jesus might have actually fulfilled a miracle, and have made his first appearance among them with this strongest testimony of which any doctrine was capable in the performance of a miracle, and the fulfilment of a promise; when he considered these things, and how easily he might have gained an acceptance of his doctrines by this glorious first appearance, we say, it is no wonder that the devil should have selected this as his second and severer trial.—REV. C. BENSON.

## THE BRAZEN SERPENT.

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REV. E. TOTTENHAM, A.M.

KENSINGTON CHAPEL, BATH, SEPTEMBER 27, 1835.

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**A**nd the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole, and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it shall live."—*NUMBERS, xxi. 8.*

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MERCIES which are calculated to soften, are often, through the perversity of human nature, the means of hardening the human heart. It is a melancholy thing that the history of our globe can furnish many instances of this truth: but we need not at present go beyond the case of the Israelites which is brought before us in the books of Moses. They had been the recipients of multiplied mercies; they had been chosen out of all the tribes and families of earth as God's peculiar people: they had obtained honour before Pharaoh and all his people; they had been delivered by the mighty and the outstretched arm of Jehovah; and in their passage through the dreariness of the wilderness, they had received blessings and mercies innumerable from the hands of their God; and yet, instead of being softened and melted as it were under the receipt of those mercies, it very often happened that, apparently at least, the mercies were made, through the perversity of their nature, instruments of hardening them.

Now, when thus they constantly rebelled against the Most High, and notwithstanding the various blessings which he bestowed upon them, we find that inasmuch as sin always brings after it fearful consequences, and inasmuch as God is a God of justice as well as a God of mercy, so when the Israelites forgot their Maker, and when they sinned before him and against him, and rebelled against his authority, the history informs us that invariably some awful punishment was visited upon them.

We have a case quite in corroboration of these remarks, in that portion of the book of Numbers which stands connected with our text; for we read that "the Israelites journeyed from mount Horeb by the way of the Red Sea, to compass the land of Edom: and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way." Then they were tempted to rebel. "And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water, and our soul loatheth this light bread." Here was their sin, this was their rebellion, this was their forgetfulness of that God who had given every blessing which they required: and consequently, the penalty was visited upon them; "and the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the

people ; and much people of Israel died." Here they were brought into their right mind ; they were brought to see and to know that they had sinned against Jehovah, and had forgotten his mercies. In the experience of the bitterness of that penalty which was attached to their transgression, they came to Moses, and they said, " We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee ; pray unto the Lord, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people. And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole : and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived." This was God's appointed ordinance : there was exceeding simplicity about it ; yet it was his : and the people, suffering as they were under the poisonous bite of the fiery serpents, were simply told to look to that serpent of brass, which by God's special direction had been set up before them ; and when they looked upon that serpent according to God's command, and in the full persuasion of God's power to relieve them, they should live. Such is the circumstance here described.

But let us not forget that we have divine authority for carrying it beyond the mere historical circumstance here mentioned : for you will remember that our blessed Lord, in his conversation with Nicodemus, especially alludes to this circumstance as typical of the most important event : " As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up : that whosoever believeth in-him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

In this view we shall proceed to consider the matter, calling your attention, in the first place, to *that spiritual disease of which the literal one here recorded was the type and the illustration*—the disease of sin. For let us not forget that the diseases of the body are used in Scripture not unfrequently to point out the diseases of the soul. For example : on one occasion our Lord was entering into a conversation with those that were called emphatically " publicans and sinners"—with the bad and the profligate characters of the day ; the Pharisees, in the pride of self-righteousness and self-sufficiency, found fault with him : but what was his reply ? " They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Here, then, we have divine authority for considering the diseases of the body to which we are subject, as illustrative of that more grievous and desperate disease which is committing its fearful ravages in our world, and which is the source of all the misery, wretchedness, and unhappiness to which we are subject ; I mean the moral disease, the spiritual plague of sin. This, however we may be inclined to deceive our own hearts, is a disease which is just as extensive as the inhabitants of the globe upon which we live. We know nothing of the other creatures of God that may people those bright orbs with which the immensity of creation is bespangled : but we have to do with this our world ; and the testimony of Scripture is explicit, the evidence of experience is insurmountable, that this disease is ravaging and ruining naturally the whole human race. What is the description which God of old gave—a description applicable, in the first place, to the people of Israel, but truly applicable to every creature on the face of the globe ? " Yet," says God, " I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed" (that was

man's original creation); " how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me? For though"—(mark this description of the human character; let it have its due weight and influence upon the minds of all: it is a divine description)—" For though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much sope, yet thine iniquity is marked before me, saith the Lord."

And then (to give you one other divine authority on this subject), let us never forget the very fearful manner in which St. Paul, when treating upon justification, describes the character, not of a fraction of the human race, but of the entire family of man: he sums up his argument, " We have already proved both Jew and Gentile to be all under sin." Nor was this doctrine which St. Paul set forth a novel one; it was a doctrine which had been promulgated in the Old Testament scriptures as well as the New: and hence St. Paul, in order to prove this doctrine of human depravity and human insufficiency, quotes from the Old Testament scriptures: " As it is written," he says, " There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that (naturally) understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all (without exception) gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." Here you perceive what is the divine testimony—that in the strict and positive sense of the term it can be said, " There is none righteous, no not one;" that though there may be human excellence still remaining from the wreck of the fall, yet when you come to look at man, not according to a human standard, but according to the law of God, it may be said with the strictest truth. " There is none righteous, no, not one;" but that " all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." This, my dear friends, is a plain truth, and is at the same time an humbling one—to think that we are so ruined, so infected by that malady that is within us.

But then remember that this disease—if it exists, as it does—if it is co-extensive with the globe, as it is—if it is of this most infectious character—this disease is pregnant with the most fatal consequences. The consequences are much misery in *this* life, but they will pass the confines of the grave. They may come on us as sometimes bodily diseases come, like the rushing down of a sudden illness, which carries the individual unexpectedly into eternity; or they may be, in other cases, only like the gradual progress of a decline: but in either cases the consequences are such (for which God gives his authority pledged for it), that his law has uttered its anathema against every creature defilement: and God is not a God that he can change; he is not like a human being in whom there is every species of variableness, and every shadow of turning; but God being a God of truth, of holiness, and of justice, we are sure that if he has said, " The soul that sinneth it shall die," " The wages of sin is death," that penalty will be exacted to the very last farthing; and more than this—that inasmuch as we all, according to that testimony which I have adduced, are proved to be under the influence of this spiritual disease, unless we lay hold of the all-merciful remedy, the penalty will be exacted in our individual cases.

In the second place, I would notice *the inability of the people of Israel to cure themselves*, as being illustrative of *the insufficiency of man to cure the spiritual disease of sin*. Here were the people; they had sinned; they were under the consequences of their transgressions: they were suffering from the

poisonous bites of the fiery serpents: but they were in a state of utter inability in themselves, they felt their wretchedness, but they had no human means at hand, nor could they find any, by which the disease might be mitigated or removed altogether: and therefore, when they not only felt the difficulties existing, but when they saw their destitution, misery, and insufficiency, they went unto the Lord, they confessed their sin, and sought for a divine remedy, being persuaded that that was the only remedy which could meet their case.

Ah, my friends, there are multitudes among men who, if we look at them in a spiritual manner, are not so wise as the Israelites; who, though disease exists within them, and though sin is withering away their moral powers, and though, to a certain extent, they will admit the existence of the disease, yet set about curing it themselves, and seek to find a remedy in their own supposed merits, in their strugglings to obey that law of God which God has given, although their obedience, at the best, must be imperfect, and therefore cannot accomplish that which they desire. But remember, that just as it was physically impossible for the Israelites to cure themselves from the poisonous bite of the serpent, so it is morally impossible that any man can cure his own soul, or render unto God that which can be the ground of his acceptance, in our present imperfect state of being. We have all broken the law of God; the law demands perfect obedience: how can we conceive the idea of a man being saved under the breach of the law? The idea is absurd on the very face of it, and therefore we may take it as an indisputable truth, which might be proved at length were it necessary, that unless that obedience which we have rendered to God is of a perfect kind, we cannot be accepted on the ground of it; and inasmuch as we cannot render the perfect obedience which is required, we cannot cure our own spiritual malady, or be saved by our own doings.

There is another point in the illustration of the case before us, which it is most desirable and important that we should especially notice. I have spoken of the disease of sin; I have endeavoured to point out its universality and its fatal consequences: and when I have attempted to assure you, upon the authority of the Bible, that it is morally impossible for a man to cure his own disease, or to save himself by his own doings or his own sufferings, I have only said this in order to point you more effectually, under the blessing of the Spirit, to that great remedy, to that Almighty Physician, whom God in his mercy has set before us for the cure of our spiritual diseases. Let me, therefore, call your attention, in the third place, to *the true remedy for sin, as typified by the brazen serpent.* "Make thee a fiery serpent (or a serpent of brass), and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it shall live." And what was our Lord's own application of these words? "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness," that every Israelite bitten by the fiery serpents might look to it, "even so must the Son of man be lifted up;" that every one that looks to him with the eye of faith, albeit his sins are aggravated and tremendous, "shall not perish, but have everlasting life."

Now look at the power of this great remedy; see how it meets the very worst cases. It is an infallible specific; and therefore it is one which, if we had true confidence, we should at once seek after. Is not the Bible full of images, illustrations, and express assertions of the power, the ability, and the sufficiency of Christ to save? Does not God, when he would speak of the par-

don that is in Christ, call it a " casting out of sin into the very depths of the sea?" Does he not call it a " casting of our sins behind his back;" a " blotting out our transgressions as a cloud, and as a thick cloud our sins?" Here are beautiful illustrations of Scripture declarative of the fulness of that power which is to be found in Christ.

Let me give you one passage which directly asserts the truth. The Apostle Paul, in Hebrews, ix. contrasting the priesthood of Christ with that of the Jewish priests, speaks thus: " Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands" (into the material temple, as the Jewish priests did), " which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: nor yet that he should offer himself often" (there is no necessity for that), " as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with the blood of others; for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself"—or, as it is rendered very expressively in another translation of the Bible, " But now in the end of the world hath he appeared for the destruction of sin, by the sacrifice of himself." Here is the power and efficacy of that remedy which the Gospel sets before us in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, that be our sins ever so great, be the disease ever so aggravated, Christ has appeared for the destruction of sin, by the sacrifice of himself: he has made, not a partial, but a perfect atonement; he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified; and therefore although the consequences of sin be fearful and tremendous, yet Christ has borne the penalty of transgression; and those that look to him by faith, shall find the fulness of that salvation which he hath wrought out; and although the power of the disease be great within us, and leads us forward by the corruption of our nature to sin, and to carelessness, and to ungodliness, yet Christ has appeared for the destruction also of the *power* of sin; for it is a most essential part of the message of reconciliation that Christ has promised the Spirit of holiness to break down the power of the disease within us, to purify the fountain of the human heart, that the stream which flows from it may again be pure, and that the man who has taken refuge in the blood and perfect obedience of Christ, may abound in holiness and in all the fruits of the Spirit.

Let us notice also the *necessity which exists that we should feel our need of this remedy*. In the case before us, when the Israelites were visited by punishment, if they had not felt that the disease was a grievous one, and if they had not seen that numbers of their fellow-creatures were perishing around them under the influence of that disease, if they had not felt their need of a remedy, think you they would have come and besought God that he would have provided such a remedy? No, my friends, by no means: even as we well know in reference to our bodily circumstances, unless we feel there is some infirmity, unless we are persuaded (in a measure at least) that there is something wrong in our system, that there is some bodily malady, we will not take heed to the voice of the physician, or the remedy that may be provided for us. And, believe it, this is very analogous with respect to spiritual things: unless we are persuaded that we need a remedy—that is, unless we are persuaded that sin exists within us, and not merely in a general way, but particularly so, and that it is big with destructive consequences—we shall never see the sufficiency and efficacy of that remedy which is found in Him who was exalted on

the cross that every one who looks to him might be saved. O then, do you feel your need of the remedy? Believe me, it is the first thing you must feel: you must be persuaded of your necessity.

But to go a step further: I would notice also, not merely the necessity of feeling our need of the remedy, but *the necessity of taking the remedy which is provided*. Now suppose (to recur again to the case here) suppose these Israelites were perishing under the bites of the serpents; suppose God had given the command, as he did, that a serpent of brass should be erected; suppose he had made a promise that every one that looked to him should be healed; and suppose still further, that the people, though they were perishing under the influence of the poisonous bite, yet did not care to look on the serpent of God's providing, and rather disbelieved the promise which he attached to his command; think you they would have been cured by the provision made? No, they would have perished without the remedy, and the blame would have been on their own heads. So also with respect to bodily disease: although we may be convinced a disease exists in our system, yet, if we choose not to take the remedy provided for us, we have no reason to expect we shall be healed of our bodily infirmity. So in religious matters—so in spiritual things: disease may exist within us, a remedy may be provided, we may be exhorted and commanded to take heed to that remedy that we may be saved; but if the remedy be not taken we must perish; and, as in the other case, the blame will rest upon ourselves. Remember it is said, not only, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up;" but the taking of the remedy is next to that—"that whosoever *believeth in him* should not perish, but have eternal life." You see, then, that faith, trusting in Christ, believing in him, is just to the soul what the taking of medicine is to the body.

Now let me ask you, What are your feelings, what are your persuasions, what is your belief with regard to this disease of which I have been speaking? Perhaps there is not one in this assembly who would not at once confess the existence of sin; but, believe me, you must go further than a mere general admission of it. You must go as far in your feelings, in your convictions, in your persuasions, as the language of our most excellent church goes, which you are in the habit of reciting within the house of God; your convictions must go as far as that, or it is useless for you to hear of the glory of the Gospel. If you are convinced as you ought to be convinced, if you are persuaded of this great malady which is so ruinous in its character, forget not the Physician; remember that he invites you to come, that he tells you of his power, that he declares his willingness, and that he promises that whosoever comes to him he will in no wise cast out. What should you think of a man, who, when he was suffering under a bodily disease, knew that he was suffering, and knew that that disease would probably issue in his death if there was not a remedy provided and used—what would you think of the man, who with all this before his eyes, and with the knowledge of the remedy, should refuse to take it? Ah! the man were wise, supremely wise, in comparison with that man who is told of the existence of sin, who is told of the ruinous character of sin, and who yet, for the gratification of the passing hour, neglects to embrace the remedy.

My dear friends, this is a most serious matter: for not only by such conduct

are we exhibiting the greatest possible madness and folly, but we are adding guilt to guilt; for we have in addition to all our other transgressions, that grievous transgression of rejecting mercy when mercy has been offered. Seek then the Physician that the Gospel presents. And if any of you, and I trust there are many, have not only been convinced of sin, but have found a remedy in Christ, I would say to such, be thankful for such grace. There is no blessing in all the catalogue of God's rich mercies for which we have such reason to be thankful as the gift of his own Son. Express your gratitude to him for that gift, and show that you are grateful by consecrating yourselves to his service. Live to his glory, and seek to show forth his praise; and although we may be surrounded by much infidelity and iniquity, yet let it be our part to let our light so shine before God, that the wicked, seeing our good works, may glorify God our heavenly Father.

## THE VISIT OF BARNABAS TO THE CHURCH OF ANTIOTH.

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REV. F. A. COX, LL.D.

MARE STREET CHAPEL, HACKNEY, NOVEMBER 1, 1835.

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Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad."—ACTS, xi. 23.

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THE history of the proceedings of the primitive Church, as they are detailed in the Acts of the Apostles, is of the most interesting description. We are introduced, upon divine authority, to a knowledge of their favours, their difficulties, their self-denials, and their happy successes. The first ministers of the Gospel, who were some of them also its first martyrs, devoted themselves with self-denying zeal and perseverance, to the great work of evangelizing the world; sowing the seed of the everlasting Gospel, which sprang up and bare considerable fruit in the regions of Asia Minor. It is instructive and important to observe, too, the peculiar manner in which the providence and grace of God were manifest in raising up and qualifying particular individuals for the performance of special and prescribed duties: and there is nothing more delightful in the history of the Church, from the first period of its institution to the present moment, than to trace this preparation in the course of providence, of particular persons for particular labours in the Church of Christ. "One star differs from another star in glory;" but every star has its appropriate light, and its appointed place, and combines with every other in the harmony of the external universe. Every member, and every minister especially, of the Christian Church (who are compared with these stars), has each his appropriate sphere of labour in the Church of Christ, and all in combination, by the grace of God, deriving their light from the great central luminary, from Christ himself, reflect it in their ministrations and labours upon the dark benighted world. Barnabas was a man eminently qualified in the primitive Church for the discharge of those duties to which he was called, and to which reference is made with regard to one particular service in the words of our text: "Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad."

I shall take occasion from these words, in the first place, to specify the object, as well as the occasion, of the journey of Barnabas on this occasion: and, in the second place, to shew you the gratifying character of it. The object of his journey is distinctly specified in the connexion of the passage, when he went down to Antioch: and the gratifying character of the journey is intimated in the words of our text, "Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad"

Let us inquire for a moment into THE OCCASION AND OBJECT OF HIS JOURNEY. We are informed distinctly, that the church at Jerusalem had its members scattered by the power of persecution, and that they went about in various directions to preach the Word; and "the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned unto the Lord." How wonderfully God frequently renders subservient to his own cause, the vehemence and hostility of men whose efforts are in a contrary direction! They had thought by persecution to extinguish the infant cause of the Redeemer, and by scattering its disciples, to scatter its truths to the winds. But God renders this the very means for the more extensive diffusion of the Gospel; the wider spread of it, the sowing of it in those places which had been hitherto waste and desert, till the prophecy was fulfilled, "There shall be a handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountain; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon."

Now when these individuals went forth in different directions, tidings came of their success, and word that the Lord was with them, "and a great number believed and turned to the Lord. Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch. Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad." Barnabas, therefore, undertook this journey at the instigation, and under the sanction of the brethren at Jerusalem, who sent him forth upon hearing the tidings of the success of the Gospel in that country and region; and he went accordingly.

How different are the objects for which persons travel and journey! There are some persons who travel only for the purpose of business, to promote their secular concerns and welfare. We do not object to this; for we are exhorted to "be diligent in business" while we are "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." The religion of Jesus does not detach man from the sphere which Providence has assigned him, or deny our pursuit of those avocations which belong to ordinary life, and stand in immediate connexion with the comfort or respectability of existence. The religion of Jesus does not claim that we should withdraw from society into the desert and into solitude; but that we should fulfil our obligations and duties. Still the pursuit of secular business is not the highest object that we can conceive as the object of travel and journey; nor would the pursuit of business have been, in any case, an object so great and so important as that which was the occasion of the journey of Barnabas when he went down to Antioch, and to which this reference is made. There are some persons whose journeys contemplate individual pleasure, enjoyment, recreation, or self-indulgence. These, it must be admitted at once, are not the highest ends for which we might journey and travel. The highest purpose is that to which Barnabas consecrated his labours, and for which the brethren at Jerusalem sent him forth, which was thus to investigate the state, and trace the progress of religion: this was his great and glorious object. Barnabas went not to Antioch upon a mere matter of business; much less did he go, sent by the brethren of Jerusalem, upon an excursion of pleasure: but he went to investigate the state of religion; to look into a subject which was so powerfully present to the attention of the apostles, when tidings came from Antioch of the success of the Gospel which was preached and published there.

I may remark, further, that there were some considerations which rendered it peculiarly proper and desirable to send Barnabas upon his errand. He was

in himself a man of discriminating judgment, and sound and elevated piety. He stood connected with these eminent brethren in the Church at Jerusalem. (We are running no parallels, but stating the fact with regard simply to this messenger of the churches, Barnabas, who was sent upon this errand.) The apostles made a wise and happy choice in sending one like him to look into these concerns, to investigate the state of religion there, and to consider the nature of those tidings which had reached their ears at Jerusalem. But there were proprieties in this arising from other considerations, to say nothing of the excellence of the character of Barnabas. These, of course, must have been contemplated by the apostles who sent him; but there were these considerations: sometimes reports are made to us from a distance, of the state of things, as it concerns religion, as well as other affairs, which are altogether untrue and unsatisfactory. Sometimes these reports originate in a way which we cannot well explain: but they do originate, they are propagated, they are sent abroad, they are circulated to a great distance. And when these reports are of a highly pleasing and gratifying kind, it is of great importance that an investigation should be established into their reality and truth, because sometimes reports which have been exhilarating, have proved to be, after investigation, altogether unfounded. Now when the church at Jerusalem heard of the progress of the Gospel, that the hand of the Lord was with them, and that multitudes believed and turned to the Lord in Antioch, it was evidently desirable, and was a proper step in them, to commission one of their number to go and investigate the truth of this statement, that they might not be deceived, but that they might rejoice if the tidings proved to be well-founded. Barnabas, therefore, went forth to Antioch.

Sometimes statements that are made, even with regard to the progress of religion, if they be not untrue are exaggerated. The passions, the prejudices, the self-flattery of men, and many other considerations and feelings, sometimes induce them, without any intention to depart from true and veracious statements, to make statements, which, as coloured by their own passions and prejudices, are substantially untrue, because they are exaggerated. Now when they heard such happy and wonderful tidings of the state of things in Antioch, and the progress of the Gospel there, it was natural, it was desirable, and it was wise, that they should institute a proper inquiry into the subject, and that they should send forth an individual on whom they could rely, to bring them tidings, or to give them information as to the real truth of these statements, whether they were exaggerated or not. Barnabas, therefore, went down to Antioch at the desire of the brethren, to communicate the fact with regard to these tidings, as to the reality of them, and as to their exaggeration or otherwise.

Then in the case of Barnabas there was another consideration. The mission of a person from an important body would be gratifying and encouraging to persons who were newly converted to the truth, and to the churches which were at a distance from their immediate residence. We cannot but imagine, that when Barnabas went down to the city of Antioch, from this important body at Jerusalem, composing the primitive church, from the apostles of the Redeemer, that he would be received with kindness and with joy, and that it would tend very much to the encouragement of those individuals that were associated in church communion there, to receive a person from them, to see the face of one

who represented them, and to hear from his own lips tidings of the state of things *in Jerusalem*, of the progress of religion there, of the intention of those eminent individuals with regard to the future, as well as to inquire into the facts and state of things as they had occurred in the city of Antioch. Barnabas, therefore, was commissioned for this important purpose by the apostles; and we are informed, “ Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem : and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch. Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad.”

These missions of kindness, and of benevolence, and of inquiry, therefore, are of apostolical sanction and origin, and the vigilance of those who composed the primitive churches, and their zeal, was apparent, and their self-denial was manifest, in commissioning individuals thus to go and investigate the state of religion in particular places, and to bring tidings thereof, that they might joy with the joys, and mourn with the sorrows of others, and that they might be enabled, in those spiritual conferences which they afterwards held together, to devise means, on the ground of well assured information, practically and immediately, for the wider extension of the Gospel, or the drawing closer together in the bonds of Christian fellowship, those who were dissociated by place, while they were united in love. Such was the occasion, and such was the general object of the journey of Barnabas, when he was sent down by the brethren from Jerusalem to Antioch.

I hasten now, in the second place, to remark, from the record of this passage, **THE GRATIFYING CHARACTER OF THIS VISIT** : “ Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they whould cleave unto the Lord.” You will observe, my brethren, that Barnabas found occasion for joy in seeing the grace of God. He might have seen many other things, but they did not attract his eye ; at least, they did not attract his heart. He went down to Antioch for one object. He might have seen as he passed the beauties of nature, and in the city the splendours of architecture, and in society many things to interest or to entertain him ; but what he most wished to see, and to ascertain was, the grace of God ; and when he saw it, it made him glad.

But how could he see the grace of God ? Why, he saw its effects ; he saw what was the result of the operations of the Divine Spirit accompanying the labours of his faithful ministers and servants there. He saw religion, he saw purity, humility, faith, holy zeal, union, spirituality of mind and character, and a conduct becoming the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This he saw ; and in seeing this, he beheld the grace of God. How so ? Because no natural principles could have produced these effects ; because nothing but the Spirit of God can subdue and sanctify a sinner’s heart ; because in no one single instance can the sinner be converted to God, but by the omnipotent operation of his grace : and wherever that takes place, wherever an individual is converted to God, there we see, not the operation of human principles, but the undoubted proof of the grace of God. Who can turn man from the error of his way but God ? Who can cleanse the polluted spirit but God ? Who can sanctify and save the soul, but He who shed his blood for the remission of our sins, and who gave the promise of the Father, which was fulfilled in the descent of the Holy Spirit

upon the day of Pentecost? O yes, my dear hearers, it is the delight and joy of Christian ministers to see the grace of God; and whenever they see the penitential tear, the believing glance at the Redeemer's cross, a spirit of separation from the world, and of devotedness to His service; wherever they see, in whatever persons, humility and faith, and obedience to his commandments, the love of the Sabbath, and the love of the brethren, and the love of ordinances, and the love of Christ, they see the grace of God; they see that which attracts the delight and attention of superior spirits. These are movements in the human mind, these are transformations in the human character, which delight the blessed spirits above, and which give a higher tone of extacy to the very harps of the blessed.

These considerations are founded upon the exact truth of Scriptural declaration, which represents all heaven interested in the conversion even of one soul. And can the Christian minister, or the Christian missionary, feel otherwise than deeply and powerfully the all-commanding influence by any other principle or sentiment than this? No, it is the grace of God.

My dear friends, I trust that without presumption we may say (certainly facts will sustain us in saying) that we have often seen the grace of God in this place. That grace converted many of you here; that grace which regenerates —that grace which

“first contrived the way,  
To save rebellious man;”

that grace which the Spirit of God implants in the heart, and by which he works the wonders of his redeeming and sanctifying power, has been manifested by many a one in the course of successive years since this place has been erected. We have seen, and we acknowledge with devout gratitude and with inexpressible joy that we have seen, in the young, in the aged, in the busy, in persons of every class around us, from time to time, the grace of God. How often have we led the willing captives to the waters of the sanctuary! How often have we seen them standing forth to proclaim what God has done for their souls, with holy boldness in the presence of the great congregation! How often have we seen them putting on Christ: and many of them have never put him off, never falsified their profession! How often have we seen individuals putting on their armour for the Christian conflict! And they have fought well to the last: many of them have risen from this scene of spiritual contest, to the triumphs, and the victories, and the glories, of immortality. They are now singing the song of Moses and the Lamb; the recollection of their past triumphs enhances the joy of their present triumphs. They watered their couch with tears and engaged in spiritual conflicts: tears are wiped away for ever, the conflict is over, and the victory is won; they have entered into the joy of their Lord, and are waiting your coming, who are engaged in the same conflict, and anticipating your triumph, not because you are strong, but because Christ is mighty, and his grace all-sufficient: and when Christ imparts his grace, that grace will accomplish all; for “he that hath begun a good work will carry it on until the day of Christ Jesus.” Therefore we are glad whenever we see these operations of divine grace and mercy: then, like Barnabas (at least like Barnabas in feeling), we are “glad.”

This is the gladness, I will freely avow to you, which has not unfrequently inspired my own and my colleague's heart, on witnessing many scenes which

have invited our attention and inquiry on the American shores. We went, we beheld, we saw the grace of God, and we were glad. Those same causes which have inspired our joy in our own churches and assemblies, we have seen in powerful, in vigorous, and in extensive operation there: and we are come back to tell you that the tidings you heard were true; that the reports which had reached your ears from the American continent from time to time were, as respects the general progress of religion, substantially at least true, that they were not generally speaking exaggerated, and that they are tidings which may with propriety be repeated, and which must when they are repeated and reported excite your joy and devout gratitude to God. We have seen those operations of the grace of God in that land which convince us that the Spirit of God is not limited to one land or to one order of means, but that he works in many lands by many means, by various instruments; it is one spirit, one religion; Christ is all and in all: *we* preach Christ crucified—*they* preach Christ crucified: *that* is a name dear beyond the Atlantic as well as dear in Britain; and it is a name above every name, that unites us all, and leads us to feel that whatever the diversity of climate, or character, or opportunity, we are one in Christ Jesus.

Now you will observe that when it is stated in the language of this passage, that Barnabas “when he came and had seen the grace of God was glad,” these points are implied: it is implied first, that he saw *the reality of religion*. It was the grace of God he saw—genuine conversion. He saw that there was not merely an excitement, but that there was an exhibition of true religion. We are not for condemning all excitement in religion; far otherwise—there may be too little of excitement. There may, it is true, be too much of mere excitement; but of this I am persuaded—that religion without zeal and love is but an empty name; and that God works by his providence and by his grace through the very medium of excitement, to produce lasting, converting, and beneficial effects on the mind.

Barnabas when he went to Antioch saw the reality of religion. It is only in the fact of *the journey* that we identify ourselves with this individual; but my dear friends, when we went to America we saw the reality of religion; we saw it in the union of Christian brethren, in their harmonious feeling, in their Christian love to each other, and to others who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. We saw it especially in their undaunted and unhesitating profession of religion where they felt its power. We saw it in the speaking eye, the feeling heart, and the eloquent tongue; in their vast assemblies, in their great combinations for the promotion of the cause of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in the mighty enterprises which they are continually undertaking, similar in their character to our own, for the spread of the everlasting gospel, from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same. Yes, *there* as well as *here* is the reality of religion. How delightful was the consideration, when we sometimes looked on a scene which we could not but realize as a scene where once Indian-trod, and where cruelties were practised at the instigation of the prince of darkness; a scene where ignorance and superstition, vice and impiety in every form, infanticide, murder, and all that disgraces humanity, prevailed amidst the darkness of universal ignorance; a scene and a land now occupied by unnumbs *hated* thousands who are the worshippers of the Almighty, and who are at this *very* moment of our meeting together in the solemn assembly of the saints,

sending up praises to God from thousands of tongues and thousands of churches, and sending up, too, fervent prayers for British Christians, and for those who in this land are united to them in the love of the Spirit and the grace of God : why, could we be otherwise than glad ? I refer not now to some things which might modify some statements that have sometimes been given, but to the substantial facts of the case : and I ask whether we could be otherwise than glad when we saw the grace of God, and when we found those tidings were true which had been reported, that “ the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great company believed and turned to the Lord.”

But there is another consideration suggested by the language of the text, which implies that Barnabas saw to a considerable extent *the prevalence of true religion* : he saw the grace of God. I had occasion to be present at several meetings, called either “ prolonged,” or “ revival” meetings, in the American States. I remember the first thing of the kind which I saw, and which struck my attention, and which may be exemplified best as to its character and the effects produced, by the words of our text with regard to Barnabas : “ Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad.” The first manifestation of what is called “ a revival spirit,” presented itself to my own notice on the following occasion, and in the following manner. I was travelling through the States of New Hampshire and Vermont, towards Canada ; I came to a place where a school-house had been erected by our denomination of Christians, by those whom we call, at least, the General Baptists—(for education is carrying on to a very great extent every where now, and with increasing rapidity in the United States : school-houses and seminaries of instruction bearing a religious character are rising up with surprising rapidity and increase). I came, in the course of my solitary journey, to this spot ; I was invited to examine and to look into the interior of this educational institution. I had been informed by the pastor of the place, or by one connected with him, that there had been in that seminary what they term “ a revival.” There are several species of revivals ; but it is not necessary to discriminate now ; but there had been what is generally termed “ a revival ;” and it had issued, through the instrumentality of this faithful minister of Christ, in the conversion of several inmates ; and, at least, ten from that school had joined the church. I was invited to look at the seminary ; and after investigating its state, and examining, as far as I thought proper, into the general instruction that was given in various departments, to deliver an address to them. I went through a few of these examinations which were satisfactory, and afterwards addressed them, in the first place, with relation to the general interest of learning, and the advantages of their situation with reference to the improvement of the mind. They paid attention to these remarks. Presently I felt it of course my duty and my privilege to touch upon the subject of religion. Ah ! the moment I named the cross of Christ, the moment I touched upon religion, there was a speaking and a glistening eye : I saw at once an attention more fixed, more riveted, more ardent, than I had ever witnessed before, almost on any occasion ; and I could not help saying, “ Ah, this, then, is a revival ! this is a revival ! ” It is not an external exhibition, not a forced entry upon public notice ; it is not an effort of others to rouse to unnatural excitement ; but it is a display of an internal grace that beams through the eye, and that speaks the love of Christ in the heart. You will not wonder that I felt a deep interest, and when I saw

the grace of God I was glad. And what did I wish, but that in *our* schools, in *our* seminaries, and in *our* public institutions, we may all see similar demonstrations of the grace of God! O that the young may be brought to love the Saviour! O that they may listen to his precious words, and regard his holy ordinances! O that on sacred days, or on other occasions, when the great theme of redeeming love is touched, we may see the same melting, feeling, humbled spirit, the beaming eye, the gladdened heart! O that we may thus see in you, my dear young friends (and it will diffuse unutterable joy), the grace of God! We saw it, and were glad. For this end will we pray; to this purpose will we labour; for this object we entreat the concurrence of our friends, the co-operation of all who love Christ in sincerity, that the church may prosper; that the Gospel may be extended; that Christ may be glorified, and the sinner humbled; and that gladness may fill heaven and earth at the story of returning sinners come back to God from their wanderings.

There was one more element of joy in the mind of Barnabas unquestionably on this occasion—it regards *the future*. Depend upon it, Barnabas did not think only of the present moment; depend upon it, he did not restrict his views solely to what he saw in operation. But what did he see? He saw the grace of God, and he knew that that grace of God would produce still further, higher, and more extensive effects. What did he see? Why, he saw persons who had indeed become lights in the world. He saw the heads of families converted; and in seeing the heads of families converted, he saw individuals who would lead their children to the Saviour, and erect a family altar to God, and combine with others in the Church of Christ. He saw in those who were converted, no doubt in the anticipation of his faith, many a future member of the Church, many a future minister of the Gospel, many a future martyr for the Saviour. Could he be otherwise than glad? He saw the foundation laid for the Christian Church, numerous and extending over the land, and the bearing of the influence on the mass of those who were converted at that time, on the future state of men around, and upon posterity to a far-distant age. My dear friends, this is what we see when we see a young person converted to God: we say to ourselves we are glad, not merely that that individual is converted to God, but that that individual is to become hereafter the head of a family, who may exert an influence on society by his intellectual character or spiritual worth or intercourse—who, at any rate, is not a solitary individual, but, in whatever sphere, will have some influence, and have that influence sanctified at the fountain head, purified in the individual's heart, and, therefore, sending forth streams of good, in exhortation, in example, in prayer, in piety, in future life. Can we, therefore, be otherwise than glad and rejoice, when, like Barnabas, we thus “see the grace of God?”

My dear friends, I will detain you now no longer, but come to the close of this subject: but I cannot do so without appealing for one moment to you who have not yet exhibited any symptoms of the powerful influence of the Gospel upon your hearts. Your minister wishes to see the grace of God in every pew, in every seat, in every gallery, in every individual present at this time. We are gratified with your courtesy, with your friendship, with your personal affection; but this does not answer all our views, all our feelings, wishes, and desires. We are not satisfied, we cannot be, till we “see the grace of God” *in you* until, young people, as well as our aged and our matured friends, we

have the happiness of conducting you in the paths of righteousness and obedience. O what a blissful return shall I feel it, what a touch of superior joy will it produce in my heart, if, amid the many and overflowing mercies of God in bringing me back across the tempestuous ocean into your midst again, I shall have the happiness of seeing, not your faces, not your friendship only, but the grace of God in you! This it is will inspire a joy unspeakable and full of glory. O to have a heart consecrated to God! O to see in every rank, in every pew, in every individual, the grace of God! This, indeed, will cheer, and animate, and inspire future efforts. Christian brethren, members of the church, pray for this: friends of the Redeemer, pray for this great object. The great revivals of America, all the valuable and important revivals, as I have found from very extensive inquiries, begin in *prayer*, in the *spirit* of prayer, in the *act* of prayer, in *combinations* for prayer, in the church's prayer—fervent, constant, frequent, unremitting, at home, abroad, in the meetings appointed for this purpose. It is prayer that animates, and that produces and calls these effects into exhibition, and gives them character.

O then pray without ceasing: and as we have met to day under peculiar emotions of gratitude and of joy, let not the day pass without a solemn determination in all our minds, to make the best use of all the exhortations, and all the solemn and affecting meetings of this day, by determining to pray with more fervour, and to attend the meetings for prayer in greater numbers and with more hallowed zeal; that we may call down the blessing of heaven, that the reign of grace may indeed be apparent, and that showers of blessings may come down to water God's heritage, and to cause the springing forth of a spiritual beauty and richer verdure around us. So shall God be glorified: we are nothing, God is every thing: Christ is all, his Spirit is all. We are but poor feeble instruments; we acknowledge it. O then may it be more powerfully felt that the glory may be given to God, and that though we are called upon to be a voice to you, and to labour in your service, yet that we are less than nothing, and of no consideration comparatively: Christ is all and in all: and if he will render (I pray earnestly he may) our humble efforts and admonitions subservient to the promotion of his own cause and to your eternal salvation, **his name shall have the praise on earth, in heaven, and through eternal ages.** Amen.

## THE NATURE AND SOURCE OF THE REDEEMER'S SORROW.

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REV. C. B. WOODMAN,

ARTILLERY STREET CHAPEL, OCTOBER 25, 1835.

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"A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief."—ISAIAH, liii. 3.

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It appears impossible to read the narratives of the sufferings of the Redeemer without the most intense interest. They abound with such inimitable pathos and sublimity of description that, independently of their being records of circumstances that have actually transpired, they are invested with such piety and beauty that we do not envy the man who can peruse them either in a thoughtless or disinterested manner. You are aware that even infidels have confessed, that as compositions they teem with the richest imagery and the most affecting details that are to be met with in the whole compass of language. Now if such are the effects produced on minds totally opposed to the truth of Revelation, how much greater interest may we be supposed to take in the details of that awful tragedy with which our destiny is so closely connected.

The Bible, you are aware, abounds with allusions to this subject: the details of the various sacrifices and ceremonies of the Jewish ritual, all directly refer to the sufferings of Jesus Christ. It appears to me that the Deity adopted this method of communication, for the purpose of identifying in an incontrovertible manner, the person of our Saviour. Hence recourse is had to prophetic enigmas relative to the character, offices, and sufferings, of Jesus Christ. Prophecy, like a mystic lamp, throws a glimmering light on the cloud which enshrouds futurity. The ancient seers appear to have held converse with future generations—to have looked through the veil which envelopes the scenes and circumstances of other times; and by foretelling a series of events which were to transpire when they should have mingled with the dust, have given no weak evidence of the genuineness of Revelation—have furnished an unanswerable argument to the absurd dogmas of the sceptic, and have erected a pillar for the support of our religion, which neither the sophistry of men nor the subtlety of fiends will be able to overthrow.

Your time will not permit me, and it would be foreign to my purpose, were I to enter into any thing like a dissertation on this species of composition. It is a subject which must remain wrapped in mystery till time shall have dispersed the mist by which the greater part of it is enveloped. I am aware that many have attempted to unravel the secrets of futurity—they have hurled anathemas at those who have differed from them; and perhaps there is no subject that has occasioned greater controversy in Christendom than that of prophecy. But

it is not ours to enter on forbidden limits; we will not attempt to lift the veil of uncertainty; we are content to rest in hope that what we know not now we shall know hereafter. But however absurd it may appear to pry into hidden mysteries by rashly interpreting prophetic lore, this is a portion of it which has so completely met its accomplishment, and the meaning of which has been so satisfactorily revealed, that we are justified in considering it as a proof of the soundness of our cause, and calculated to produce the greatest benefits. Such are the words to which your prayerful attention is now requested: He was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief."

In making a few observations on this passage, I shall, in the first place, inquire what was the nature of the sorrow of which the Redeemer is here supposed to be the subject; and in the second place, the source of that sorrow, and the ends which it was destined to accomplish.

Sorrow, you are aware, is of two kinds; personal, and relative. The one is an action of the mind when borne down by the intenseness of its own sufferings, the other is occasioned either by its sympathy with the body, or by commiseration with a fellow-creature. In each of these ways, Christ may be said to have sorrowed: he was the subject not only of bodily suffering, but of the severest mental agony; he was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." The bodily anguish of the Redeemer, though it was great, was evidently far less severe than that of his mind. His sufferings are represented as unparalleled, and his visage as being "marred more than that of any man." Now how are we to account for this and similar expressions if bodily torture is principally intended. That it was great I do not deny; but it would not be difficult to select many instances from the records of martyrology where severer measures were resorted to than in the present instance. Some were worried by the beasts; others were gradually consumed in the flames; and many tortured in a way which I conceive must not only have increased but protracted their sufferings. If we judge, too, from the circumstance of the speedy dissolution of the Redeemer, which appears to have taken place considerably before that of his fellow-sufferers, we cannot but suppose that the bodily sufferings which they endured were at least equal to those of which he was the subject.

We therefore conclude that it was a mental passion to which Isaiah more directly refers. You may remember that in other parts of the prophecy it is said, "He made his soul an offering for sin." And again: "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." If we follow him to Gethsemane, we find him "travailing in spirit," and "sorrowful even unto death;" and when suspended upon the cross his pain appears to have been of a similar kind, arising from a consciousness of his Father's anger, and the hiding of his Father's countenance. *Then* "it pleased Jehovah to bruise him, to put him to grief." *Then* it was that despair settled upon his brow, and the angel of death flapped its dreary wing across his path, and compelled him to exclaim, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" "And as this," says Dr. Dwight, "was his only complaint, it must, I think, be believed to refer to his principal sufferings." But the evil here complained of is, being forsaken of God: in other words, God hid his face from him; that is, if I mistake not, withdrew from him those manifestations of complacency in his character and conduct which he had before made. As this was itself the most distressing testimony *c<sup>t</sup> the Divine anger against sin*, so it is naturally imagined—and I think, when we

are informed "It pleased Jehovah to bruise him," directly declared in the Scriptures—that this manifestation was accompanied by other disclosures of the anger of God against sin, and against Him as the substitute for sinners.

I need not remind you, my brethren, that it is not necessary to receive bodily pain in order that we may become miserable :

" There is a pang which rends the heart,  
Which all may feel, tho' none can tell : "

There is a sorrow of the mind, there is an agony of feeling ; there is a speechless, voiceless suffering, the intensity of which presses us down in spite of our will. It fetters the soul, it damps our hope, it impairs our energy, it withers our expectation ; it inspires the mind with a feverish tremour, arising from an agitation too keen to be expressed, and leaves it the prey of unutterable woe. We have felt it when we were the victims of some little and narrow mind which used its temporary power for the exercise of its petty and contemptible tyranny. We have felt it when the world has frowned upon us, when friendship has been dissolved, and when our confidence has been destroyed. Then has despair shot through the brain, the feverish throb has quivered upon the pulse, and we were left to grapple with the agony of grief. We have felt it when cherishing their hallowed memories who are lost to us for ever. We have felt it when standing by an expiring friend, and catching the last look as it flashed from his closing eye. We have felt it when he bid us the final farewell, and breathed that sigh which wafted the spirit to the other world : and when all was over, and we were left with the cold tenement of one that was dear to us, clasping the hand of our departed associate, *O then have we* felt the agony of grief.

" Have you lost a friend or brother,  
Heard a father's parting breath,  
Gazed upon a lifeless mother,  
Till she seem'd to wake from death ? "

Then, have you felt the agony of grief. And what are the most excruciating pains when compared to this ? What the severest torture of the body, when compared with the midnight of the soul—the dark and cheerless torpor of the mind ? It is like the whisper of the dying breeze when compared with the thundering of the angry tempest. There are remedies which may alleviate the former, but " a wounded spirit who can bear ? " It spurns every lenitive, it refuses every consolation ; the prop of the system gives way, and all is lost in unutterable despair.

The same causes, however, do not produce similar effects : it requires various degrees of power to operate on different objects. It is so in the natural world. we are affected by circumstances in exact proportion to our mental capabilities. Hence arises that diversity of feeling which exists in different persons and species. The brute creation are less affected than we are, owing to their incapacity to reflect on the bearing of the disasters to which they are liable. Instinct is insufficient to inspire them with those feelings which we possess. Even man himself varies in this particular. One man can grasp a subject in all its parts whilst another is unable to comprehend even its simplest rudiments. If *then* you believe Christ formed an essential portion of the Godhead, you must admit that his mental capabilities must have been immense. It requires the

utmost stretch of human understanding to form the minutest conception of them. Imagine what must have been the limits of that thought which planned the fabric of the universe, and placed its various dependencies in their exact stations—which not only overlooked the whole, but was mindful of the minutest parts—which not only attended to the homage of the cherubim, but listened to the cry of the meanest suppliant. These are parts of its ways—the whole of its power who can understand? There are other systems over which it presides; there are other beings of which it is mindful; there are other worlds of which it is the ruler: and if you carry your imagination to its utmost stretch, you will be utterly lost in attempting to discover the limits of its guidance and its protection.

Imagine, then, what must have been the travail of that soul which was not only alive to the minutest circumstance, but could grasp infinity itself. Even our limited powers are sometimes distracted by grief, and overwhelmed with wretchedness: how unutterable, then, must have been that misery which oppressed the mind of the Omniscient! Our sorrows resemble the solitary stream which occasionally ruffles the path over which it glides—*His* the mountain cataract which rolls along with desolating fury, bearing in its course devastation and death.

Some minds are so constituted that they can treat almost every thing with indifference; they appear indifferent to every attack that is made upon them. There are others of so tender a make, that they are ruffled by the slightest breeze—so delicate, that they are withered by the chills of adversity—so susceptible of injury, that the slightest unkindness can wound them. Now the mind of the Redeemer appears to have been imbued with the tenderest susceptibilities. Of this we have a touching proof in his visit to the grave of Lazarus. He there consecrates the ashes of his friend with the tear of sympathy: and so great was his sorrow on that occasion that it was emphatically said, “See how he loved him.” His career on earth presents us with innumerable instances of benevolence, and of all those virtues which can do honour to our nature. There was nothing like bravado or that intrepid daring, commonly (but erroneously) termed *fortitude*: there were no symptoms of malice, of hatred, or of anger; the rougher passions found no place in his bosom; to him animosity and revenge were equally unknown: so justly and so emphatically was he termed “the Lamb of God.”

Let us reflect for a moment what must have been the feelings of such a mind. When the Redeemer was buffeted by his cruel persecutors—when he was spit upon, reviled, and insulted, by the very refuse of society; surely he was “a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.” It is remarkable that there is only one instance on record when he is said to have rejoiced in spirit. The cloud which hovered over his cradle darkened the whole of his life, till at length it burst on the hill of Calvary. Surely he was “a brother born for adversity.”

The pleasures arising from the cultivation of friendship, are amongst the most exquisite delights which are left us in this dreary world: they are some of those flowerets of Eden which occasionally bloom in this bleak wilderness; and to a superior mind there can be no trial so severe as their loss. When the Saviour was on earth he selected a few with whom it was his delight to associate. They were a happy family, aptly denominated “sheep among wolves.” You may remember, that on that eventful night when the fearful drama was

acted, and the plot was ripe for execution, having given them his benediction and commended them to his Father and their Father, to his God and their God, he led them to the garden whither he oft resorted with his disciples, and after praying, with strong crying and tears, a man who had been accustomed to associate with the favoured few betrayed him to the assassins, and delivered him over to the infuriated populace. My brethren, what an hour was that! He was forsaken by his friends, and he was forgotten by his God! "He trod the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with him." He seemed suspended in a fearful vacuum between heaven and earth: clouds and darkness were round about him; his mind was big with unutterable woe, and his soul "sorrowful even unto death." If he reflected upon the *past*, there was the remembrance of former glory, angels and archangels bowing before him, and ten thousand times ten thousand ministering unto him. If he contemplated the *future*, there were the pains of death, there was the conflict with the powers of darkness. Hell assaulted him at every turn; his sweat was as blood falling to the ground: and when he could bear it no longer, and exhausted nature sunk beneath the pressure of the conflict, "being in an agony he prayed more earnestly, Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done." But, my brethren, this was impracticable. It was an event in which the honour of Deity was implicated, and on which the destiny of the Church was suspended. It was necessary that he should enter his kingdom through the arena of conflict, wearing on his brow the scars of honour, and wielding a sceptre glittering with the ensigns of victory. It had been predicted that he was to come "from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah, travailing in the greatness of his strength." It was decreed that he was to wade to the throne of the universe through a sea of blood, and to ascend it accompanied with the hallelujahs of the ransomed church: in fine, my brethren, that the Captain of our salvation was to be "made perfect through suffering."

Such was the cup of which the Saviour had to take; such the sorrow of which he was the subject: and this leads me very briefly to notice, in the second place, THE SOURCES FROM WHENCE IT AROSE, AND THE ENDS IT WAS DESTINED TO ACCOMPLISH. We have been contemplating grief the most intense and unparalleled. We have beheld a Divine victim sacrificed on the altar of atonement. We have witnessed a scene in which the very elements appear to have sympathized: and surely such an event could not have occurred but from some strange and momentous necessity, connected with the destinies of our race. Is it not natural, then, to ask, Why did the angels become mute, and why did silence reign through the celestial choir? Why was it that the fellow of the God of Hosts was immolated on the altar of retribution?—and why did he travail in the agony of his spirit? The source of this sorrow, my brethren, may be traced to that sin which

" Brought death into the world, and all our woe;"

which disarranged the order of the universe, and set up a barrier between the Deity and the creature of his power. Ever since the fall of his progenitor, man had been adding crime to crime, and heaping transgression upon transgression: the thoughts of his heart were evil, and that continually. If you

look to the most celebrated city of the day, what do you behold? The noblest of her sons stemming the tide of fame, and revelling in the flow of glory and of ambition: her senators lost sight of this momentous subject in their inordinate attachment to the weal of the state; their patriotism carried them to such an excess, that their country was the idol to which they sacrificed every consideration, and consecrated all their energies; and that man was deemed a fanatic who yielded to the sceptre of the God of Hosts, and offered his invocation to the Father of his spirit. A law had been proclaimed, but that law had been broken; an authority had been instituted, but it had been trampled upon and rejected. The crimes of no less than four thousand years had accumulated; and, blackening the whole canopy of Heaven, had risen like polluted incense before the throne of the Eternal, and called for vengeance from that God who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity.

Now, my brethren, it was necessary that an atonement should be made for the sins of the Church. The torrent which swept along with desolating fury had to be rolled back again, and the portals of immortality to be thrown open. Who, then, was to accomplish the mighty work? Who was to avert the impending judgment? The highest seraph humbled himself, and replied, "It is not in me." Only One was mighty to save: He trod the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with him." Brethren, He was "the mighty God;" He was "the everlasting Father;" He was "the Prince of Peace."

We learn, then, my brethren, that the one end that was to be accomplished by the sufferings of Christ was, *that the way of salvation might be opened for all who believe.* I allow that the doctrine contains mysteries too deep for the mind to comprehend, and which philosophy has vainly endeavoured to discover. To the tasteful Greek it was foolishness; and there are many who scoff at the fact, because their finite reason cannot fathom the councils of infinity; because they are unable to solve that which the very angels desire to look into. But though the infidel may scoff, and though councils may issue their anathemas, we have the sure word of promise, and it is written as with a sun-beam, that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him shall not perish, but have eternal life." I speak, then, to use the words of another, to the farthest off in guilt and alienation amongst you. Take the overture of peace that is now brought to your door, and you shall add to that kingdom which Christ came to establish; and you shall take away from that kingdom which he came to destroy. The security of the sinner, and the glory of the Saviour, are as one; and with the spirit of the monarch who had to fight his way to a kingdom that was rightfully his own, will he hail the returning allegiance of every rebel as a new accession to his triumph; as another trophy of the might and the glory of his great undertaking. Do you ask me what is the basis upon which this invitation is founded? I refer you to the uniform tenor of revelation. If we examine those venerable records, we shall find that these invitations are commanded to be given by the great Head of the Church: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." It is written in one place, that God "willeth not that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." Again: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man has thoughts and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him,

and to our God, and he will abundantly pardon." Paul tells us, that "the grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared unto all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." And, when writing to Timothy, he says, that "God would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth." And in 2 Corinthians, v. 19, that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing unto men their trespasses, but hath committed unto us the ministry of reconciliation." "My little children," says John, in his general epistle, "these things I write to you that you sin not; but if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous." And Paul, writing to the Romans, repeats the same beautiful sentiment, when he says, "For as, by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so, by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." O! there is something beautiful, there is something consolatory and highly encouraging in these delightful passages. Do they not place the ambassador for Christ on some high and glorious vantage ground, whence he can appeal to his fellow-men, and beseech them to taste the waters of life freely? And these, my brethren, remember are the true sayings of God, not the words of man; they are the sayings of God, which have survived the convulsions of states, the overthrow of empires; and will exist in all their beauty, and in all their purity, until the apocalyptic angel shall stand with one foot upon the land, and with the other on the mighty deep, and swear by Him that sits upon the Throne, that time shall be no longer. Yes, my fellow-sinners, the barrier which separated the sinner from his Maker is destroyed, salvation is obtained, and you are invited to partake of glory, honour, and immortality.

Your time will only permit me to notice one more result of the sufferings of Christ, and it is this, *that by the sufferings of Jesus Christ, there shall be accomplished a complete triumph over the powers of darkness*, by the setting up a kingdom that will never be destroyed. O yes, my brethren, the Jews were but little aware that they were instrumental in the accomplishment of this mighty work. How ignorant were they of the fact, that to the cross on which they fixed the Redeemer, all nations would flock to see the salvation of God; that it should exist in remembrance, when Jerusalem should have mingled with the dust, and when time itself shall be no longer! But Christ well knew what was to be the result of his sufferings: he saw of the travail of his soul, and he then was satisfied: he beheld the word of God conquering, and to conquer: he contemplated Ethiopia and the isles stretching out their hands unto God; the desert beginning to blossom and bloom as the rose; and the knowledge of the glory of the Lord filling the earth, as the waters cover the channels of the mighty deep: and then he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost: and if he retired from the conflict, he retired from it exulting in victory. Yes, my brethren, convoyed by the angelic messengers, he ascended the great white Throne, while the millions of the blessed struck their lyres, and the armies of heaven bowed before him. Then was that religion introduced which the infidel has vainly attempted to refute. Amidst the shock of conflicting opinions, it has been disseminated. Empires have disappeared; states have been overthrown; the most celebrated cities have crumbled to the dust, still it continues uninjured amidst the general ruin. Vainly have the

powers of darkness attempted to obscure the light that was thus kindled; still it burns, and it shall shine brighter and brighter unto the perfect day; for Christ must reign until all his enemies are his footstool, for on his vesture, and on his thigh, is a name written, " King of kings, and Lord of lords."

Has it not been promised, "The knowledge of the glory of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the channel of the mighty deep?" Is it not written, "I have given thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession?" Have you not read, that "to him" (that is, to Christ) "every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess?" O yes; this is a work which must be completed; these are the words of One who cannot lie; and therefore we believe that the Saviour must "see of the travail of his soul," and must "be satisfied." If you doubt it, retrace for a moment the history of the earlier ages of the Church; and what do you behold? Why, the holiest of her sons daring the flames of martyrdom, and sealing their testimony with their blood. Look, again, at the records of the history of the Middle Ages, when popery was in the zenith of her power, and when the woman of the Apocalypse revelled in the blood of the saints and prophets, and made herself drunk with the uncleanness of her fornications. Listen to the groans of the spirits, as they are crying from beneath the altar, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, wilt thou not arise, and avenge our blood upon them that dwell upon the earth?"

My brethren, what a spectacle does this history exhibit! The greatest enormities that man could possibly invent; the most shameless indecency and unblushing cruelty; all united together to blaecken the annals of the period, when the powers of hell and earth were let loose to overthrow the temple of the Most High; and, amidst a mass of unparalleled opposition, the Church was still secure, for it was founded on a rock, against which the gates of hell have never been able to prevail. It is true that the waves of opposition have rolled around it, but they have burst again in the hollow murmurings of despair. It is true that the lightnings have flashed around its summit; but they have all gone out again in night. It is true the thunders of infidelity have rolled through its very heart; but they are lulled again into the whispers of the passing breeze. And now, look at the Church! She smiles at every attempt at invasion; she rises above the gathering storm; she springs from the flame of persecution, and with the cross on her summit, and the banners of holiness streaming from her dome, she is receiving fresh accessions to her numbers; and when those numbers are complete, the mighty pillars which prop the universe will give way; and, rising from the wreck of nature, and the crash of worlds, she shall ascend to the Paradise of God; and there, amidst the hallelujahs of angels, she shall be welcomed to the joy of her Lord.

My brethren, I speak it with caution—but it really appears to me, that if we look out upon the scene which is now stretching around us, we may evidently see the marks of approaching and speedy triumph to the cause of the Redeemer. The spirit of the times, and the aspect of the moral world, seem to justify the supposition, and to indicate the arrival of an important era. "Many are running to and fro, and knowledge is increased." Be this as it may, the work that has commenced will be completed; the predictions relative to the spread of the Redeemer's empire will be verified; the angel is on the wing in the

midst of Heaven, preaching the everlasting Gospel to them that sit in darkness; and to every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, soon shall be heard the approach of his chariot wheels; and then the jubilee of the Church shall be celebrated, and the triumphs of Christ shall be sung. He shall give up the kingdoms to God, even the Father, that God **may** be all in all.—*Thus* shall He see of the travail of his soul, and **be** satisfied.

## THE FINDING OF THE RANSOM.

REV. T. J. JUDKIN, A.M.

SOMERS' CHAPEL, SOMERS' TOWN, NOVEMBER 8, 1832

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“I have found a ransom.”—JOB, xxxiii. 24.

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WHAT a burst of joy was there from the heart of the old Greek philosopher, who had been labouring long and ineffectually to solve a difficult problem, when all at once light broke in upon his mind, and he sprung from the bath, and ran, naked as he was, through the streets of the city with the shout, “*Eureka! Eureka!*” that is, “I have found it! I have found it!”

And now, to compare temporal with spiritual things, if so strong was the emotion upon the discovery of some scientific truth, which at best could only affect a passing interest, with what deeper thankfulness should the bosom of the lost and of the ruined sinner expand, when, amidst the perplexities of a vain search after the “one thing needful,” he beholds at length in the Lord Jesus Christ a ransom for his immortal soul; when in the precious blood of the Lamb of God he sees the mighty price so freely given and so immediately accepted, whereby he is redeemed from the bondage of Satan, and raised into the glorious liberty of the sons of light. O how eagerly ought he to catch at the proffered means before him; and with what energy of a brotherly love might he not be expected to rush into the streets and into the highways, bearing abroad the blessed tidings to the ears of a suffering world!

But shame, sorrowful shame, is it, that the conduct of that heathen philosopher puts the conduct of the Christian to the blush. Shame, sorrowful shame, I say, is it, that a pleasure in finding out, and an activity in making known, the school-man’s secret, should be so strongly opposed to the indifference and the indolence with which the nominal believer receives and extends the revelation of the Gospel of peace. Shame, sorrowful shame, is it, that the natural man should so highly appreciate the knowledge which is self-derived, whilst the professed disciple of Christ takes so low an estimate of the knowledge which is from heaven, which Christ, in his incarnation, came to display, and which the most gifted of all teachers, and the most illustrious of all martyrs, laboured to propagate, and died to confirm.

Now I put not this case too strongly. I fearlessly rest my appeal to many here, upon their own views of their own conduct. You once heard of the ransom which Christ offered to you, and you not only spurned it from you, and hugged your chains, and welcomed your prison-house, but even after the marvellous grace of God, and of God’s Spirit, brought the ransom home to you in all its power and in all its efficacy, the inbred corruption of your souls strug-

ged with and overcame the purpose to make it known. I say, I charge it upon some here, that you have suffered the love of ease to stifle the first design of giving the interesting matter its due circulation. I say, I charge it upon some here, that the affairs of the world sat like a nightmare upon your religious profession. I say, I charge it upon some here, that had you made some personally enriching discovery in worldly knowledge, that would have roused the whole man, that would have led to the broad dissemination of the important secret: whereas the conviction, the knowledge that Christ is the ransom, and that his blood is the redemption-price of pit-fallen and prison-bound man, has had no free course at your hand. It may be true that you have, in the pollution of your souls, drank deeply at that fountain opened up for all uncleanness: but even at this present are you not sluggish, I say, in enabling thousands who are athirst to partake of the same living waters? My inquiry is—and I have the answer in the sense of your own lukewarmness in the condemnation of your own hearts at this moment—Have you taken any interest, many of you, in making known the glad tidings of the Gospel of salvation? Many have been perishing at your sides for lack of knowledge. I often think that upon the great day of judgment the question will be pressed as to what we have done in *unholy* things, and as to what we have done in *holy* things. I often think that the *clear perception* of the *worldly* interest will be put in fearful contrast with the *blindness* to the *spiritual* interest; that faithfulness, decision, and zeal for the one, will be put in fearful contrast with instability, with indifference, with apostacy, with coldness to the other; that the consideration of the matters *temporal* will stand in righteous judgment against the consideration of the matters *eternal*; that the care of the *body* will be “*a swift witness*” against you in the care of the *soul*. Every day we see the necessity that we try the matter by this rule: every day deepens with me the necessity that we pray more and more for the assistance of that blessed Spirit, through which we may become more and more abstracted from the world, and more devoted to Christ and to the things of Christ.

“I have found a ransom.” May this knowledge ever dwell within us in the freshness and in the fulness of its earliest impression, in the impression of the young convert; and may it to the end of your lives excite to all means, to all endeavours towards extending it to others, for the good of souls, and to the glory of the living God! Amen.

“I have found a ransom.” These words, you will find, were from the lips of Elihu, the companion and counsellor of Job. Nor was the discovery less present to the mind of that righteous man himself, when he said, “I know that my Redeemer liveth.” But the men of that day had but dim visions of Him that was to come: they had to look through the type to the Antitype—through the symbol to the thing signified. What, however, they saw as in a glass darkly, it is our privilege to see face to face: they walked as men in the twilight; but upon us fall the beams of the meridian sun. Our testimony is, that while every priest of old stood daily ministering, and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, this man, Jesus, after he had offered one sacrifice for sin, for ever sat down at the right hand of God. O may our faith, and may our gratitude—O may our love, and may our zeal, keep pace with our privileges, that we be not condemned at last by our privileges!

“I have found a ransom.” In the first place, these things bespeak in the

man who uttered them a knowledge of man's state : secondly, they convey a knowledge of man's deliverance—the means of his deliverance : thirdly, they open an inquiry as to the acquisition of this knowledge: and fourthly, I would briefly advert to the effect which this knowledge should produce upon the person who obtains it.

"I have found a ransom." He who said this was practically informed that he wanted a ransom. A *ransom* signifies the price of redemption from captivity. Before we apply for a ransom we must feel that we are involved; we must have a powerful conviction, we must have a feeling conviction, deeper than words, that the iron hath entered into our souls. "They that are whole," said our great Master, "need not a physician, but they that are sick." The man who trusted the little Jewish maid in her suggestions concerning the prophet, was conscious of his leprosy.

This sensibility to our suffering condition is the very foundation-work of an appeal to Jesus. Man by nature is in bondage ; he is taken captive by Satan at his will. In his innocence he was God's own ; in his guilt the wicked spirit hath made an invasion, and wrought a fearful conquest : he is no more God's own when he is in subjection to the enemy of God—he is Satan's own. Now this is the situation of the world, and yet the world knows it not—the fact is only spiritually discerned : the natural man is like the poor bird that is engaged from its very nest ; its prison is its palace ; its home is not the broad sky to which God ordained it, but amidst wires set about it by the hand which made it captive. And so Satan coops us up in the bars of an evil world : thousands, unconscious of their original freedom, die in their confinement, having wings, and yet not knowing how to use them. O it is a melancholy spectacle of the degradation of the reason to see it thus shut up : it is a melancholy spectacle of the abasement of the God-soaring affections, to see them thus curbed and confined by the wicked one. Now there was a time, my brethren, when you were in deep captivity, and you knew it not, and you felt it not ; when you thought that the worldling's was the true liberty, and the Christian's freedom was the only slavery ; when you esteemed the galling burden of Satan better than the light yoke of Christ. But this view is altered now, and you have found no tyranny so oppressive as the tyranny of sin, and no task-master so grievous in his exactions as Satan. You are in the land of promise, the Canaan of rest, and you shudder to look back upon that awful Egypt, in which your servitude was in darkness and in chains. You are now in the exalted train of those who love Jesus as their King, and you recoil greatly at the spiritual condition of the multitude, who are his whom they obey. O it was a miracle, that light in the soul which shewed you what you were ! O it was a blessed voice, that cry of your soul that applied to the Lord in tears and in groanings for the great ransom which he sent ! And the view of your sorrow was the view of your relief: the moment you felt the weight of your chains, why then your chains were snapped, and you were free : you saw the blackness of your dungeon, and the moment you saw it the door was thrown wide open, and you walked in liberty, for you walked in Christ.

Secondly, the words before us indicate a knowledge of THE MEANS OF MAN'S DELIVERANCE. "I have found a ransom." The prisoner finds a ransom—

where? In the offers of the worldly-wise? In the counsellings and the suggestions of self? No; fling back the offers upon the deceiving lips. Count the advices as light and vain: return them as folly into the hand which proffered them, and bury the flatterers of self, blind and weak self, in the dust. The ransom is in none of these; it is nowhere but in the all-compassionate, the all-sufficient mercy of God; it is no where but in the unmerited, the free, the full, sovereign, and spontaneous outpouring of the love of the divine heart. it is no where but as presented in the utterance of that blessed sentence, "God will provide himself with a lamb for the burnt-offering."

"I have found a ransom." No man ever breathed this assurance until his eyes were fixed on the atoning sacrifice of Jesus. To what else could he turn? His sin in its reckless daring had provoked the infinite majesty of heaven: his soul, in its guilt, had sullied the law of the infinite in holiness: his sin in its penalties had exacted an infinite condemnation from the infinite in justice. And where might he look for infinite compensation, but in the infinite merits of the Son of God! The ransom that could redeem from the bottomless hell, and raise to the glories of God's right hand, could only be found in the unsearchable riches of the incarnate Christ.

Now the man of science will tell you, that upon a few drops of poison being cast into the sea, the infusion will spread through the whole ocean: and thus the believer will say, Sin has diffused its viculent influence through all the depths of my immortal soul: and what shall be able to spread over its surface, to neutralize the pervading evil, to cleanse and to purify, but the infinite virtues of the mysterious God-man, Jesus Christ? His precious blood, as a Lamb without blemish or spot, was the only equivalent that could satisfy the demands of the broken law, was the only ransom that could be accepted for the redemption of the sinner from the miseries of an eternal world.

"I have found a ransom." To him, in these words, all the patriarchs, all the judges, all the kings, all the priests, all the prophets looked under the old dispensation; and to him, in these words, must every soul look to the end of time, who would pass from the power of Satan unto the light and the blessedness of the family of God. O, my friends, let me ask you earnestly and affectionately, Do you realize this truth? Do you, I say, realize this truth? Is it yours to say, "I have found my ransom in Christ?" It is true that I was sunk in the deepest bondage to the enemy: it is true my will and my understanding was his, and my affections were his, and all my strength was his—all my exertions of the head, of the hand, and of the heart; and my soul was his. It is true that I had bound myself, that I had sold myself, to work mischief, like another guilty Ahab, in the sight of the Lord. It is true that in my natural state I ~~laiki~~ tied and bound, as it were, ready to feed the unquenchable burnings. But now I am emancipated, freed, and delivered from the body of this death: I am snatched as a brand from the fire: I am a pardoned man, I am a reconciled man I am a sanctified man, I am a justified man, I am an accepted man, I am an adopted man, and when my strength faileth, I shall be a glorified man by reason of the precious ransom that was given for me, and received for me, in the atonement of Him that became a ransom for many."

Ah, my brethren, if you have thus found that ransom which is freely offered to all who are travailing and heavy laden under the sense of sin, sure am I, that whatever the ills that press upon you—though fortune deceive, and though

friends abandon, and though you were the only desolate thing amongst God's works, though, like Job, you be chastened with pain upon your beds, or like David in your distress you may tell all your bones, that stand staring and looking on you—still, I say, you are a privileged man, a highly honoured man; you have a store which all the barns of time cannot contain, and which overflows in the riches of eternity.

Thirdly, THE ACQUISITION OF THIS KNOWLEDGE—(that is to say, a knowledge of your own heart in a state of nature, and a knowledge of the ransom that is provided for you in the dispensations of grace), both the one and the other proceed (and I have told you this again and again, and I must tell it you again and again as long as I am with you; I say it must become the substance of my every sermon), PROCEEDS IMMEDIATELY FROM THE SPIRIT OF GOD. He convinceth of sin, and he alone. His light shines into all the intricate passages, and the windings and the turnings of the sinner's bosom, and his alone. His ray falls upon and discovers the true features of that odious idol self, that many-headed monster whom we love to set up under one form or another; that legion of hell (shall I say?) that possesses our fallen nature with so many devils. But if this be the work of the Spirit, it is also his work to guide us into all truth, and to bring before the soul in the hour of its intenser wretchedness, at the period of its deepest despair, that most inestimable gift which God in his love hath bestowed, that most welcome ransom that man in his destitution could desire—the Lamb of God in the virtues and in the powers of a vicarious sacrifice. “Behold,” said the Spirit by the voice of John—“Behold the Lamb of God.” “Behold,” says the same Spirit to every one that mourneth for a ransom in the house of his captivity—“Behold the Lamb of God.”

Now then, if this was found to be the blessed work belonging to the Holy Spirit, with what strength of prayer should you plead for his influence, that you may in humility and godly sorrow prove the truth, that the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, and that you may from the bondage of Satan be enabled to reach the cross of Christ, in all the vigour of a holy faith. Self-appropriating thus the language of Elihu to the distressed Job, you shall “pray unto God, and he will be favourable unto him: and he shall see his face with joy: for he will render unto man his righteousness.”

“I have found a ransom.” These words imply that the ransom was sought for: and this seeking, as I have said, is a course of humble, and diligent, and ~~despairing~~ prayer. The ransom can be met with in no other way; whilst its discovery is certain, is inevitable, in that. But there are here the *unransomed*, there are here the captives of Satan; there are here those, to whom their very chains are now making pleasant music; who talk of freedom in a dungeon, and call the fare of the prison-house a feast of fat things. Such men, I say, are before me. O that such should be convinced of their great folly! O that such could enter into the joy, the substantial joy, of the redeemed in Christ! Then they would know what freedom is. O that such would now go home, and shut to the door, and commune in secret with their own souls, and with God, praying that His blessed Spirit may be in them as an influence to illuminate, and as a ~~constraining power~~ to guide; that so, in the words of the chapter of my text, the

Lord may "deliver them from going into the pit," may "bring back the soul from the pit to be enlightened by the light of the living."

But what is THE EFFECT where this spiritual and saving knowledge obtains? "I have found a ransom." We know that, in ordinary cases, a great finding is a great rejoicing. As I have said, if a man were to make some new discovery in science, as Newton did of the law of gravitation, or as Harvey did of the circulation of the blood; or if a man were to find a costly pearl or diadem, or if a man were to recover his own lost child, why, there would be an exulting of the heart. O what gratitude, what praise, ought the discovery to make in the soul, of having found a ransom for it—for the immortal soul! Surely the longest life is too short for an adequate ascription of praise; surely the whole heart ought to become, as it were, a living lyre, all the strings vibrating with joy—joy before the Lord!

"I have found a ransom." Now, let me ask, *has this interesting fact*, if you have found a ransom, *begotten a love in your souls to Christ?* Do you admire, do you adore, the miraculous grace of God, who hath seen your affliction, and hath come down to deliver you? Or will you partake of the glorious benefit weakly and coldly? What need is there of a faithful voice to point these inquiries, to call your spiritual mercies to remembrance! You are living amidst the very influx of great miracles, and often see not the miracle. You make progress in your journey, but you set up no Ebenezer in the way. In the flooding abundance of holy gifts, the Lord, the giver, receives not a tithe of the praise that belongs to him. But again, remember (and it is a striking instance, at least it would be a striking instance were it not common, of the ingratitude of man), that of the *ten* that were cured of their leprosy only *one* returned to give thanks to Jesus. O how often is the conduct of the nine a true picture of your conduct! While God remembers, man forgets. All things else retain the image of the Being who made and enriched them, all but the hard and the unyielding stone within you. The heart—the human heart—is the most impenetrable rock in the world, for it needs the Spirit of God to break it.

"I have found a ransom." O inscribe these words upon the door-posts of your chambers; write them upon the walls of the temple; wear them as a frontlet betwixt the eyes, as the most important and the most glorious of all truths which can be brought before you; that there may be a deep, and a vigorous, and a constant flow of the soul in gratitude to God, and in love and praise to the Lamb who hath redeemed us with his blood, that, being bought with this price, you may glorify God in your bodies and in your spirits which are His! Amen.

GOD'S WILLINGNESS TO SAVE.

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"WHO will have all men to be saved, and to come to a knowledge of the truth." This passage, with many others of a similar import which you will find in the Scriptures, has been considered by many as opposing other parts of the sacred volume. It would be more correct to state that it may be viewed as opposing some of those particular and favourite systems which men have framed, and which they profess to have derived from the Scriptures. This gives me the opportunity of recommending to myself, and to you also, to cultivate a humbleness of mind, and with simplicity, and the hearts and teachableness of children, to accept the statements of Scripture as given by Him who inspired them. I can quote many passages, which will prove that God has chosen men to salvation from the beginning "through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth." I can also quote many passages, which prove that God invites all men, without exception, to be saved. But, say you, how can you harmonize it? I am not called upon to do it: my business is to read the Scriptures, and to study them with diligence. And there are two points to which my attention should be directed.—Does this Book rest on evidence which no man can gainsay and refute? And then, if it does, I am to take its statements as I find them. And these two statements to which I have referred as represented in this Book, I can understand both, I can admit them both. When I put them together, I may find much difficulty in harmonizing and conciliating them, but nowhere am I commanded by God and his word to do this. I believe humbly in the doctrine of God's sovereignty; but I believe as firmly that God will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth. O for more of that simplicity which Jesus recommended to his disciples in that memorable sentence, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." There is no reference to a specific decree to save some; there is no allusion to a purpose to save all; but a simple intimation that God is *willing* to save all. When we speak of salvation, we must premise that mankind are lost: this is the deplorable condition in which every son and daughter of Adam, without exception, is found. Tell me not of good hearts, and innocent manners, and charming characters, and persons without fault. Tell me not of hundreds and thousands who never heard the Gospel, and who never heard the sound of an evangelical ministry, who live in islands afar off upon the sea, and who are distinguished by moral virtues and pure lives. All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. Man by the fall has become a subject of guilt, a subject of depravity, a subject of misery, a subject of helplessness, exposed to damnation.—REV. J. CLAYTON.

## CHRISTIANS DEAD UNTO SIN AND ALIVE UNTO GOD.

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REV. W. JAY,

ARGYLE CHAPEL, BATH, SEPTEMBER 24, 1835.

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" Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."—ROMANS, vi. 11.

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THE change that takes place in all the subjects of divine grace is really wonderful. The language of the Scriptures is not too strong when it says concerning it, " Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree : and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off." Or when it says, less metaphorically, " If any man be in Christ he is a new creature : old things are passed away, behold all things are become new." His *relations* are new. Satan was his father before—now God is his Father. The wicked and the worldly were his companions before—now he is a companion of all them that fear God ; and the saints that are in the earth and the excellent are his delight. His *state* is new. He was condemned before, but is now justified from all things : he was before a child of wrath—he is now an heir of the glory that is to be revealed. His *views*, his *dispositions*, his *pursuits*, are new : his *way*, his *aim*, his *life*, his *death*, are all new. He is *now* " dead"—dead to what ? " Dead to sin." He is *now* " alive"—alive to what ? " Alive to God." He was both dead and alive *before* ; but now mark the difference : He was *then* " dead," but he was dead unto *God* ; he was *then* " alive," but he was alive indeed unto *sin* : but *now* he is " dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." This is the judgment, this is the estimation, the Apostle would lead the Romans to form of their character and their condition as Christians. " Thus," says he, " consider—thus estimate yourselves : reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Four things, therefore, will require brief notice. First, Christians are " dead indeed unto sin :" secondly, they are " alive unto God :" thirdly, they are dead unto sin, and alive unto God, " through Jesus Christ our Lord :" fourthly, they are willing to consider and value themselves accordingly : " Reckon ye yourselves."

First we are reminded that Christians are " DEAD INDEED UNTO SIN." This supposes nothing *less* than their avoiding sin, but it implies *much more*. A man from a fear of loss, or from a hope of advantage, or from a reference to his reputation, may be urged and induced to avoid what he loves : and there

are many (there may be such here this evening) who are ready to wish that it were lawful for them to indulge themselves with impunity in sensuality, in drunkenness, in the profanation of the Sabbath, and in the omission of public worship, and all the means of grace: and the Lord looketh at the *heart*, and will give them credit for all this. Lot's wife left Sodom, but she was loath to leave it; she was not "dead" to it, her heart was in it still. This led her to look back, and she became a pillar of salt. If all those were to become pillars of salt who profess to forsake the world, while yet they really hanker after it, we should hardly be able to move about. Some of you would be petrified as you came up the aisle; others would be left petrifactions in your pews. What spectacles would the house of God soon produce! And all are transparent in the view of God.

As to Christians, Christians are *mortified* to sin: they not only leave it, they are dead to it; and they are dead to sin as soon as they are dead to the nature of it, and not to any particular instances of it. The Christian's aversion to sin is natural (I don't mean as to the old nature, but as to the new nature); and we know that all natural aversions and antipathies operate universally. For instance, we know that sheep have a natural antipathy to wolves, but this acts not towards this or that wolf in particular, but against all of the same kind, whether great or small. It is the same with this aversion of the Christian: it is not to some particular vice to which he may have no constitutional propensity, or to which he may have little temptation in his outward calling and circumstances. No; but he prays, "Deliver me from *all* my transgressions; save me from *all* mine iniquities." He is willing to cut off a right hand, to pluck out a right eye, to mortify the flesh with the affections and desires, to abandon his bosom lusts, saying, "What have I any more to do with idols?" This is the way, and indeed the only effectual way to preserve us from all sin: other preventions will be sure to fail when the power of temptation combines with opportunity, secrecy, and privacy. It is this that serves to secure the believer so effectually under it, and that distinguishes him from every other man. He would not live in sin if he might.

This is saying much: but the Apostle says, "He that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man:" and John says, "The world knoweth us not." The world is always making mistakes with regard to Christians; and there are two with regard to this subject it is perpetually making. For, in the first place, the men of the world contend that the doctrines which Christians hold, and their principles, are not favourable to holiness, and good works only lead to licentiousness (and this is a perfect falsehood): and in the next place, they judge of Christians by themselves. Because they love sin and wish to indulge in it, they conclude that Christians also love it, and that therefore they will seek every opportunity in their power to indulge in it. But the Christian does not feel sin to be his pleasure, and therefore he does not deem the opportunity to indulge in it to be his privilege. A person distinguished by neatness and cleanliness would not deem wallowing in the mire a privilege, nor would he do it if he were allowed. There is a sense, therefore, in which a Christian lives as he lists, because his aversion is on the side of the prohibition of the Scriptures, and because his inclination now falls in with the line of his duty. If it were lawful to say to a mother, "Why you may take your child and throw it out of the window," she would not do it; she could not do it

and why could she not do it? Has she not strength enough to open the window? Has she not arms to throw it out? O! but it would violate every feeling of her nature; it would be impossible. Can she do this to her sucking-child—to the child of her womb? She *could* not: and this would be a safer prevention than any argument or threatening against it. So the Apostle John says, that the Christian “doth not commit sin”—that is, as others do, and as they once did—“for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin because he is born of God.”

You see how the apostle treats this matter in the chapter I have been reading, (Romans, iii). There were some who brought forward a charge against him for preaching a doctrine which afforded a tendency, or a permission, at least, to live in sin; and “We be slanderously reported,” says the Apostle, “by such as saying, Let us do evil that good may abound.” But how does he treat it? Why, with abhorrence: “How shall we, who are dead to sin, live any longer therein?”—dead to it by profession, dead to it by obligation, dead to it by inclination.

But you will observe, that as no creature can live out of its own element long without compulsion, so it is impossible for the Christian, now that he is regenerated by the Holy Spirit of God, to live in sin or to love it. But you will observe also, that negative holiness is not sufficient: it is not enough that the Christian “put off the old man” with his deeds; he must “put on the new man;” and while he must live soberly, and righteously, and godly, he must not only “abhor that which is evil,” but “cleave to that which is good;” not only “walk not after the flesh,” but walk “after the Spirit.” Therefore we are reminded,

In the second place, that the Christian is not only “dead indeed unto sin,” but “ALIVE UNTO GOD.” Says the Apostle to the Ephesians, “You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins.” And in this chapter he says, “Like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father even so we also should walk in newness of life.” Nothing characterizes the natural man more than his insensibility and indifference with regard to God. There are some people who deny the fall, and deny the depravity of human nature: but I speak the words of truth and soberness—if there were no instance of immorality in the world, I should want no other proof to convince me that man was a fallen creature than this—his insensibility and indifference towards God, that he does not cherish the thought of him, that he loves not to retain God in his knowledge—that he says unto God, “Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.” That a subject should be dead to his sovereign—that a child should be dead to his father—that the creature should be dead to his Maker—that a privileged beneficiary should be dead to his benefactor; can you imagine that God made man with such a disposition as this? Would you make a creature that hated you? Would you make a creature, if it was in your power, that was indifferent and insensible to you? And did God make man thus? Could he have made man thus? No; he “made man upright, but he has sought out many inventions.” Now real religion must commence in the destruction of this insensibility with regard to God. The man is convinced of his need; the man feels his desire drawn forth after God; he asks, “Where is God my Maker who giveth songs in the night?” He is

now one of the generation of them that seek him." Man is now become "alive unto God." That is,

First, alive to his *favour*. While many ask, "Who will shew us any good?" he prays, "Lord, lift up the light of thy countenance upon me. this will put joy into my heart more than when my corn and my wine is increased. This is now the strength of his heart, and his portion for ever. He knows and feels now that "his favour is life," and his "loving kindness better than life." He can draw the conclusion that God loves him. This makes him happy, whatever may be his outward condition, however poor or afflicted. As the Apostle says, he "labours, that whether he wakes or sleeps he may be accepted of him"—that is, in life and in death: and he prays that "the words of his mouth, and the meditations of his heart may be acceptable in his sight."

He is "alive to God :" that is, he is alive to his *presence*. His prayer is, "Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me." Is the sanctuary now attractive to him? It is principally because it is "the place where his honour dwelleth," where he can see his power and glory, where he can hold communion with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ; and because of the promise, "In all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and bless thee." Does he love the retirement of the closet? It is because there he holds communion with his God alone ; and we all know that friendship delights much in secrecy, and abundantly so does the friendship subsisting between God and the soul. He loves therefore the company of the godly, because they remind him of God, and bring him something of God's presence. Yes, and he considers heaven as the perfection of his happiness—not only as he will be there free from sin, but because he will be for ever with the Lord.

He is "alive unto God :" that is, to his *glory*. It is this that led the Apostle therefore to say, "Whether we eat, or drink, or whatsoever we do, let us do it all to the glory of God." He beholds the transgressors and is grieved; rivers of waters run down his eyes because men keep not God's law, and because he sees his glorious Gospel is undervalued and despised. Hence it is that he sympathizes with the cause of God in all its variations. If professors fall away, and bring a scandal upon it, he is "sorrowful for the solemn assembly," and "the reproach of it" is his "burden." On the other hand, if it succeeds, if the word of the Lord runs and is glorified, if many are added to the church of such as shall be saved, and if believers walk in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost—in this he rejoices, yea, and will rejoice: for this he has been praying ever since he prayed really at all, that His kingdom may come, and His will may be done on earth as it is done in heaven. So when he looks out upon the state of the nations, he regards the various movements and changes that take place, as a Christian rather than as a politician; and he observes their bearing on his interests by a rule of his own ; and he considers those the best times in which the best cause flourishes most.

The Apostle reminds us of a third thing—that Christians are not only "dead indeed unto sin," and "alive unto God," but it is "THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD." And this will be found to be through him, in four ways:

First, through him as their *example*. In his principles, in his temper, in his *practice*, in his life, they see the very character which we have endeavoured to describe, fully embodied. In him there was no sin ; in him there were no

irregular appetites, no improper passions. He never once in his life preferred his gratification to the glory of God: he denied himself the refreshment of sleep to engage in the duties of devotion; and he denied himself the pleasure of solitude and retirement, in order that he might attend to the claims of those who often very unreasonably addressed him. "He pleased not himself;" he always did the things that pleased the Father: and he was our religion incarnate. He could say, "My meet is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work."

Through him, secondly, as their *teacher*. O! never man spake like this man. He has set before us those arguments and those motives which have the greatest tendency to turn us away from sin, and to turn us towards the blessed God, so that we may be dead to the one and alive to the other. What threatenings, what promises, has he given! What addresses to our hopes and fears, to every passion in our bosom, and every principle in our nature! He drew back the veil that concealed the future, and showed man a world in flames, a descending judge, the judgment fixed, the wicked going away into everlasting punishment, and the righteous into life eternal.

Through him as their *dying friend*. We "know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich." We know that he "loved us, and gave himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour." And can I refuse to live according to His pleasure who has laid me under such infinite obligations, who loved me and gave himself for me? Is it possible for me to love, is it possible for me to live in, that which crucified the Lord of glory?

"No, my Redeemer; they shall die;  
My heart has so decreed:  
Nor will I spare the guilty thing  
That made my Saviour bleed."

Thus do we see in his cross the evil of sin; and thus, as the Apostle says, we become dead, and thus alive: our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed; that henceforth we may not serve sin, but that we may be "alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Through him as their *meritorious Saviour*. What we mean is this: when he died he not only died to atone for their sins, but he at the same time obtained for them that grace which they require in every time of need, for the purpose of trial, and duty, and conflict. Now how is it that this support which they possess comes to them? The Apostle tells us that he "has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." It comes, you see, through his sufferings and death. But it was not the immediate design and effect of his sufferings and death that the Spirit should be given immediately to individuals, but that the whole dispensation of it should be lodged in his possession, and that the administration of it to the end of the world should be annexed to his office. Therefore it is so often called "the Spirit of Christ;" not only the Spirit which he possessed, but the Spirit which he procured for us, and which he communicates to us: it is thus we live, it is thus we walk. We walk in the Spirit: and how is it we mortify the deeds of the body? Why, says the

Apostle, " If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body ye shall live."

We therefore see the importance of the Lord Jesus, and how every thing in the Gospel is combined with what the Apostle calls " the truth as it is in Jesus." Every diversion a minister makes in his doctrine is a step taken out of the way of usefulness, and every object that a sinner pursues in neglect of him is an observing of lying vanities, and a following of his own lusts. Allow me, therefore, to ask, What think you of Christ? I know what you *ought* to think, but I am afraid there are some of you who do not think of him at all. Is it nothing to you all ye that pass by? Are his sayings and doings nothing—his glory, his grace, nothing? How is it that he occupies so little of the creed and of the practice of many? It must arise from their ignorance or their disbelief of the Scriptures, which assure us that he is " exalted at the right hand of God, to be a prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel, and remission of sins." Or it must be from their not being duly sensible of their need of him; for " they that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." We learn from the Scriptures that he came forward in our behalf: there we find that he is " the days-man" between God and us, laying his hand upon us both: there we find that he " gave his life a ransom for us;" that he was " delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification;" that he vanquished sin, death, and hell; that he is the resurrection and the life; and that he is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; as it is written, " He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord"—that is the Lord Jesus; and reckoning yourselves to be " dead unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

You have been by the three foregoing particulars reminded of what Christians are: but the Apostle would have you consider yourselves, estimate yourselves, " RECKON YOURSELVES" AS SUCH; such is the force of the passage; and there are three reasons to be assigned for this.

First, you should reckon yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, and alive unto God, *in order to maintain the conduct that is suitable to such*; for your conduct should correspond with your character and your condition. The way to know what you *ought to do* is always to consider what you *are*; for our duties grow out of our condition and our relation. " If," says the Apostle, " ye be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God." " Seeing that ye look for such things, what manner of men ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness." Christians, you are not to live like others; much more is expected from you than from others; God, his ministers, the church, and the world, all come forth and say to you, What do ye more than others? Hence this is so often enjoined: " Let your conversation be such as becometh the Gospel of Christ:" " Walk worthy of God, who has called you to his kingdom and glory."

Secondly, you should reckon yourselves to be such, *in order to keep you from wondering at the treatment of such*. You are not likely to be, if you are such as these, the friends of the world: you are apostates from their cause, and you wil' never forgive it, you censure and condemn by your tempers and lives those who live in sin and without God in the world; and is it not likely they wil' censure and condemn you? You oppose them, and they will oppose you

as far as they have the power. They wish to be in darkness, and you ~~flash~~ the light upon them ; they wish to be asleep, and you by your Christian diligence arouse them : they will not easily forget or forgive all this. Says the Saviour, " Ye know that it hateth me ;" and why did it hate him ? What he said to the Jews he could now say to many empty and inconsistent professors of religion, who live so much in the world : " The world cannot hate you " (because they were so much like it) ; " but me it hateth, because I testify of it that the works thereof are evil."

Thirdly, reckon yourselves such *in order that ye may rejoice in the portion of such.* O ! how great is the goodness which God has laid up for them that fear him—which he has wrought for them that trust in him before the sons of men ! If the world frowns on you, he smiles ; if they condemn you, he is near to justify : such a life as we have been speaking of demands self-denial and sacrifices ; you will be more than indemnified for them if there be any meaning or truth in this Book. You may be losers *in his service*, but you can never be losers *by it*. If any reliance is to be placed on the Word of eternal truth, " there is no man who hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting :" for " the Lord God is a sun and shield : the Lord will give grace, and glory ; and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly."

Now I am fully persuaded there are persons here this evening who are justified in reckoning themselves to be in this number, reckoning themselves to be " dead indeed unto sin, and alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." But is this the case with *all* of you ? Have we not reason to fear it is otherwise with *some*, with *many* ? You are " alive " indeed, but is it not to sin ? And if so, what a taste does it imply in you ! To be alive to folly, alive to madness, alive to rebellion, and alive to treachery ! Alive to sickness and disease loathsomeness and putrefaction ; the dog returning to his vomit, and the sow to her wallowing in the mire ! All these are expressions which the wise God has employed in the Scriptures to express that thing which you love, and which you roll as a sweet morsel under your tongues. But what will be the result of this ? Why, as is your way such will be your end ; as is your master such will be your wages. It will soon be said of you, " What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed ? for the end of these things is death ; " " but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

And are you not " dead"—dead to God ? What a taste does this imply ! Dead to infinite perfection—dead to the source of all purity—dead to infinite goodness and mercy—dead to Him who alone can save, and succour, and bless, you ! If you were alive to God, God would be alive to you, and make all things work together for your good. If you are without God, God will be without you : if you are without him in time, you will be without him through eternity. O that you were wise, and would consider this ! O that God would give you " repentance unto life ;" that returning to Him from whom you have so deeply revolted, you may be able to say like those of old, " Other lords besides thee have had dominion over us : but by thee only will we make mention of thy name."

## THE AXE LAID AT THE ROOT.

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REV. J. LEIFCHILD,

CRAVEN CHAPEL, REGENT STREET, NOVEMBER 15, 1835.

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"And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees : therefore every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire."—MATTHEW, iii. 10.

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WE learn from the context that these words had respect to the Jewish nation. Its time of trial was drawing to an end: it was arriving at a crisis in its history. It had had many religious privileges, and it was still visited in mercy. "But now," says the Baptist to the scribes and pharisees and priests, those corrupt and wicked leaders of the people, who had come out to hear him preach in the desert—"Now," says he, "patience is drawing to an end; the last trial is to be given; and if that fail of its end, judgment will rush in."

Every body knows, when he walks through a garden or an orchard, and sees the husbandman's axe lying at the root of a tree, that it is a sign he has marked that tree; that unless a change in the tree make an alteration in his mind, it is marked for destruction. Thus, John the Baptist said to the whole Jewish nation, "Now also is the axe laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire." How true this was then, you well know: they rejected the mercy that was sent; they still abused their religious privileges; they were puffed up with pride and conceit on account of them, instead of being turned by them to humiliation and reformation. They still continued, as a nation, impenitent; and therefore the Roman axe of Titus Vespasian came and cut them down; and they have been cast into the fire of persecution and of separation until this day.

But now the crisis of the proceedings of the Almighty with them as a nation, is but analogous to the course of God's proceedings with other nations, and especially with religious nations. Are there no changes among *us*; no forewarning events going on among *us*, as a people and a nation? No premonitions of a reckoning being about to be entered into with us on the part of God, and of those purposes of God, long deferred and suspended, both with respect to ourselves and other countries, being speedily brought to an issue? Verily there are many things of this kind upon the stage at this moment: we are in the midst of the shaking of the nations; but we are in danger of looking off from these, and being swallowed up each one in his own personal concerns; or if not so, of looking at them superficially, at their immediate influence on different parties, instead of looking at the design of God in them. The design of them, and the use to be made of them, by those whose eyes God hath opened, and

whom he makes privy to his purposes of judgment as well as of mercy, is, that they at least may escape themselves, and then labour to be instrumental in effecting the salvation of their fellow men.

Let me glance, first, at the words in their immediate relation to the Jews; and, secondly, apply them to ourselves as a nation and individuals, both for the purpose of awakening Christians to their duties, and all to that state of thoughtfulness becoming the portentous times that are rolling over us.

Need I make an apology for referring to these things in a religious point of view? What! are we, as a religious people, to abstract ourselves from the nation to which we belong, and to feel no interest in the world around? Did the prophets do so? Did the apostles do so? Or are we always to forbear from noticing the admonitions of God's providence? That is one of the pages both of history and prophecy, which God has so amply laid open before us for our instruction and edification.

What, then, are we to understand by "the tree," and the "fruit" of it, which the Baptist here says is to be cut down? Every man is a tree in the Scriptures. "Make the tree good, and the fruit shall be good also:" that is, the human individual. But more frequently it is taken to signify men collectively. How often is a whole nation represented under this image? Sometimes it is called "the vine, which the Lord hath planted and hedged about;" at other times, "a goodly plant;" and sometimes "a goodly cedar." In the symbolic language of Scripture, the trees of a country stand for the great people, the nobles, magistrates, and aristocracy; while the inferior sort are regarded as the grass, and the herbage. Briefly you are to understand by the trees in the text, the whole Jewish nation and polity.

This tree had fruit which was to fall with it. The most probable opinion of commentators is, that the fruit was intended to signify the covenant which God had made with them in their religious state. Not only had he given them laws for their polity as a people, at the time of their coming out of the land of Egypt, which have served for the foundation and model of the laws of most other people, but he entered into a near and gracious relationship to them, covenanting, if they would walk in his statutes and keep his ordinances, to be their God; to give them revelations and prophets, and inspired teachers, the protection of his inward grace, and the influence of holy example and exalted hope. Did he fail? Read their history. Was ever any people like them? Whoever had any revelations like them? Whoever heard such voices from heaven? Who had such a knowledge of God in his works, and among whom did such illustrious personages arise as amongst them, from time to time—many of whose names are yet known, and are yet to be known throughout the earth, as the synonyme for all that was excellent, virtuous, heroic, and unrivalled in the Book of Life? Never was there such a goodly tree planted in the midst of the wildernesses and forests of this world.

But the bulk of this people were always prone to rebellion and obstinate. Hence there were frequent breaches made upon them by judgments from above. Thus, under the judges, how did the Philistines lop their boughs and damage their roots! And afterwards, under their kings, how frequently they suffered for their idolatry and wickedness from the surrounding nations! Then came Nebuchadnezzar, God's axe, who smote down that very temple in whose fair

and garnished walls they trusted for succour, while they debased its inward surface : the city also he razed, and took away all except the remnant of a righteous seed. But that seed, like the substance of an oak or the teil tree, proved the germ of replenished vigour; they revived again, and flourished under the Maccabees. Again, however, they became corrupt in all classes, and chiefly among the priests and among the nobles. So they were at the time John uttered the words of the text : and now the Roman axe, glittering from afar, is threatened to be brought near : now again is the axe placed at the root of the tree. If the nation fail now, in its last trial, it is to be cut down, to be torn up by the roots, and to be given over to rejection. And but too fearfully was this prediction verified under Titus, in the famine and slaughter that followed, and their being scattered as exiles on the face of the earth, even to this hour. Enough of the Jew.

But what a lesson is here held forth to all mankind ! Here is a lesson of *patience*. How long did God bear with that people before he destroyed them ! How many epochs do we meet with in their history, of impending destruction for their abounding iniquities still deferred ? The burnished sword glitters in the air, but is sheathed again without striking : a merciful Saviour was to come and to gather them together as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings ; "but they would not." He weeps over their ignorance, their hard-heartedness, their rejection of him, and rises out of that grave to which they had consigned him, to take his place in heaven, and pour out upon them the vials of his wrath.

So it is in the history of the world : "God," says Christ, "came three years, expecting fruit and finding none," yet he did not cut them down. Naturalists tell us, that the Eastern fig-tree, if it bear not fruit within three years after it has come to its growth, will never bear fruit at all. God forbears till amendment is hopeless. Thus he bore with the antediluvians, even a hundred and twenty years after their doom was uttered. Thus he bore with the Amorites four hundred and nine years. He has borne with the apostate church of Rome nearly twelve hundred years. But it seemed as if the Jews *never* could tire him, *never* wear out his patience. They *did*, however, at last, force the axe out of his reluctant hand to smite them down. So it is with most others. How does God bear with their provocations ; how does he put up with their rebellion, and lengthen out their lives ! Is it because it is indifferent to God ? No ; his eye is pained at the sight of their sins ; his heart is grieved with the abomination of their vices. He says "I am pressed under you as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves." Why then does he not throw you off ? Why has he not thrown *you* off ? Why, because he is a patient God, and nothing but your determinedness to die makes him give you up.

Here is another lesson, the thickening *nature of the divine judgments*. The axe is the last and the worst of the series of strokes. It is usual often to prune, often to lop the boughs : but still there was a spring and renewing of nature. After the judges, what prophets did he send ? It has been frequently remarked (and I question not that some of you have made the remark for yourselves in reading the history of the Old Testament) that the Jews never had so many prophets sent to them as while they were under their kings. (Even with regard to the wicked themselves, God employs the greatest means for their recovery.) And then when he had broken them into two sticks, and the whole ten tribes

went off into idolatry, never to return, he spared Judah ; and though it was a dry stick, he made it flourish again. But still it turned out poisonous; and it became rank and luxuriant in wickedness, especially about the time of Christ, which led to the rejection of him. Therefore now the reservoirs of divine justice must be opened and emptied: now the most sharpened and envenomed arrow in the quiver of God must be taken out, and launched from the bow; and the Roman eagle must come from afar to devour the prey. But do not you see mercy all along staying the approach of Justice, and arresting its arm? She makes use of these light afflictions, to cure us, and so to prevent the dreadful blow: and never till they have all proved in vain, and the case becomes desperate, does she consent that the dreadful blow shall be given.

What do we read in Hosea? “ I will be unto Ephraim,” says God, “ as a moth, and to the house of Judah as rottenness;” that is, a worm eating into the heart: and then he says, “ I will be as a lion, tearing in pieces;” that is, a destructive judgment. But the moth is to keep off the worm, and the worm the lion, and the warning to keep off the whole. So it is here. The axe is laid at the root of the tree; and every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is to be cut down. O, I wish that some of you could read your afflictions like this! Have they not roused you? Have they not shaken you? Have they not spoken to you? No; nothing has spoken to you in this way. Nothing! What has that sick body said to you? What has that decay in your family said to you? What does that sudden trembling of the heart say to you? Why, they say, “ The axe is laid to the root of *your* tree;” but they say it to prevent the stroke from cutting you down in your sins. O, happy is it for some of you that you hearkened to his voice, and understood, and turned aside from the edge of the axe!

There is a lesson rising out of the time of this threatening, and one that conveys admonition and instruction to us. It is this: that *the greatest mercy has the greatest severity attending it for its neglect*. What were all the prophets of the Jews, with Moses at the head, compared with that Messiah whose advent now approached? What their revelations, visions, and ordinances, compared to His disclosures of truth, His purity of worship, His gifts and graces, the near intercourse afforded by Him with God? It is now the kingdom of heaven coming down upon earth; now it is the jubilee of the world; now is there redemption for the captive and enslaved sons of earth of every nation. All the preparations of the Jewish economy are now answered in the establishment of the dispensation of Christianity. But *now* is the axe laid to the root of the tree: heaven's greatest mercy is accompanied with heaven's greatest judgment. Have you not observed this—have you not remarked, that there are no such judgments threatened in the Old Testament as are threatened in the New? Look at the Revelations: there you will read “ Woe, woe, woe to all the inhabitants of the earth.” There is no such woe threatened in the Old Testament. Listen to the language of Christ himself: “ Woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; how can ye escape the damnation of hell!” And elsewhere he makes a comparison between the dreadful doom of Sodom and that which he would pronounce on the impenitent under his dispensation; and he tells us that the latter will be of such a nature as to make the former to be reckoned “ tolerable.” Yes, brethren, the devouring flame, the sudden destruction, the awful scream of Sodom and Gomorrah, shall be a “ tolerable”

thing compared with the condemnation of those who are under the Gospel dispensation. And here is John sent to prepare the way before him; sent to introduce his Master with the axe in his hand, the axe of extermination, holding it up before the face of the Jewish nation. "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." "Now is the axe laid at the root of the tree." And why? Here is the solution, and it is a most affecting one to you and to me: *The greater the mercy, the greater the sin of rejecting it.* It is because God, in the gift of his Son to us, has opened all his heart, that the impenitence and unbelief which rendered that gift unavailing, kindles an indignation in his breast that nothing else can raise. The threatenings of the New Testament are fearful proofs of the infinite mercy of that Gospel which men despise. Think of this ye Gospel-neglecters, ye Gospel-despisers. Jesus Christ must be honoured by your more tremendous punishment for making light of him than sinners of any other description in the whole world! All the Jews that lived before the time of John the Baptist and of Jesus Christ, could not put such a weight of guilt into the scale as the last generation did by their rejecting his mild and easy yoke, and so turning a hard heart to all his invitations. So that there is the greatest threatening connected with the greatest mercy.

Now I come, secondly, to apply the words TO OURSELVES, NATIONALLY AND INDIVIDUALLY. There are many shakings among us now going on. As a people we have had many religious privileges—great ones; but we shall be called to account for the use that has been made, and the abuses that have crept into them. I am not going to prophesy; I am not going to foretel judgments, and to give a sad picture of the condition of our country; but can any one think the work of changing and unsettling which has begun, to be pregnant with no results? Can any one think, that the stirring spirit that has gone abroad among all nations, leading them for various ends and purposes to try every thing, and test it to the uttermost, some of whose upturnings have come very near to us; can any one think that that spirit is to be laid asleep, without producing more important effects than any which have yet been seen? We believe that the purposes of God are ripening; we believe that the final issue will be well; but in the mean time is there no controversy still between God and the nations and with *us*? There are very many things, concerning which it might be said at this moment, "The axe is laid at the root." We know that all false worship and superstition and idolatry of every kind must come down. If popery be antichrist (and none can deny that but those who do not read the descriptions of it in prophecy), why then its date must be nearly run out, and the nations that have cherished it must shortly be reckoned with it. You cannot suppose that what has passed in its history in times of persecution, the dreadful inquisition, the torrents of blood that have been shed, you cannot suppose that all these have been forgotten. Is the continent safe? Are there any appearances there of the storm of political emotions and revolutions being rocked to rest? Are the elements of anarchy, and the foundations of disorder all composed there? Nothing can be more contrary to the fact. The careful observer sees every where indications of future great changes and judgments prior to repose. The cinders are continually throwing up from the volcano preparatory to future eruption. But it is not only Popery as near to us, but Popery *every where*, that the Scripture frowns upon. Some out of a carnal

policy of mind favour their efforts at a distance, or restore them when fallen, while they oppose them when they are near. But that is a wicked policy; a policy that has nothing to do with Scripture, and that does not take Scripture for its rule, and calls for tears and humiliation.

But from our contiguity with certain scenes, we have reason to believe we shall be the next in the list of those who suffer from any particular commotion. I believe myself (from the whole tenor of prophecy, not from one isolated passage or two), that just prior to the destruction of Antichrist, it is to have a temporary ascendancy. For what else is the meaning of the "two witnesses" being killed, lying for three days, just as the beast is about to expire, and then to rise up and shout, "The kingdom of the Lord is come?" What else can be the meaning of the horrid revolutions and plagues, and the battle of Armageddon, and all those fearful pictures, coeval with the dark clouds that are to smother the light of truth, just as it is about to break out all over the earth? They who would give a definite form to those pictures, who would tell you what the scourge is to be, whether war, or pestilence, or famine, or civil commotion, or intestine commotion, or any thing else, are not to be heeded. The minute interpretation of prophecy is to be looked for only in its fulfilment. Men interpret these things according to their own views and wishes, and the party to which they belong; and no party will own itself to blame; not one but expects to be unscathed by the judgment. But the fact is, *all* parties are to be tried, are being tried. No one religious body will be privileged to stand and look at the others subjected to the searching inquisition of the Divine Being, while it is itself exempt. All parties are being tried and sifted; and every bad tree every where, so far as it is bad, is to be cut down: "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, shall be hewn down and cast into the fire." Let us, then, be awakened to our condition and our duty: let us look at the warnings given us, and the kind and the merciful purpose for which they are intended.

There are three things pressing at this time upon all persons concerned for their own welfare, and that of their posterity, and of their own country. May I call your attention particularly to these three things, and press them seriously on your observation at the time at which you are living.

First: *Square every thing in religion and policy by the Scriptures.* We know that when things have got out of order they are recovered by being brought back to first principles. How was the old philosophy of the schools got rid of by Bacon, but by stopping his ears against the jargon of self-taught men, and going back to nature? How does the architect recover a building when it has got out of its proportion, but by recurring to the limits of the foundation? Thus Jesus Christ cured among the Jews the abomination of divorce. They pleaded prescription: he replied, "Moses permitted this, but only for the hardness of your hearts: that did not make it right: for," says he, "from the beginning it was not so:" God made one husband and one wife, and but one ground besides death for their separation. It seems, therefore, they are to be improved and rectified by taking them back to first principles. They who tell me that the outlines of the New Testament are not sufficient for the formation of a church, and the whole of its worship and discipline, regard not history, and confide not in the infinite wisdom of Jesus Christ, his far-seeing intelligence, and his ceaseless supremacy in the Church. Let it be

tried ; let all matters in religion be regarded as Christ regulated them, by the apostles, and after the order they left it when they left the world ; and it will soon be seen whether the interests of truth will be damaged. But every party ought to look to itself, and take care how it dictates its views to others, and stands out for a punctilious agreement in all things. It is that fatal insisting upon a perfect agreement in all lesser matters, that has been the bane of religion in this country. What volumes of controversy have been written upon minor points : what shoals of pamphlets have been published of a controversial nature, on all sides, and from age to age ! Firebrands they have all been, enkindling heats and contentions. And what agreement have they produced ? I am not aware that we are one whit nearer for them all ; and I believe that if another Caliph Omir were to arise, and to consume in one conflagration all polemical theology, no party would be the worse for it. Why then permit needless strife ? Why, since we must all come to one Master, do we not all come to his word—his will, as we can understand it, and act according to it ; not throwing stones at our fellow-servants, because they do not see with us ? Let the Scripture authority prevail. Let every thing be submitted to that test, and be made to accord with its designs ; and then though all the streams should not run in one course, yet coming from the same fountain they would partake of its pure nature, and be equally free from turbidness and bitterness.

Secondly : *Cultivate a peaceful, and uniting, and moderating spirit, in all party questions.* One cannot but lament the rage of party. How dreadful is the state of the public press at this moment ! What a striving of each for his own views and his own party ! What a recklessness of character, and what a determination to infuriate their partisans ! We are all in danger from this quarter. A family, a church, a nation, divided against itself cannot stand. What becomes of the vessel when the crew is divided against itself, separated into parties, and infuriated one against another ? It is likely to become a wreck in a smooth sea ; what then would be its fate on rocks and breakers ? In troublous times and times of commotion, it behoves all persons who wish well to the public weal to take the greatest care of being influenced by party spirit. Discard the writers who would inject venom into your breast, and stand aloof from their contentions. Cultivate kind and liberal views, and a soothing spirit. Pour not the oil of retaliation upon angry and inflammatory words. Let us lay aside our ancient animosities : let Judah no longer vex Ephraim, nor Ephraim envy Judah. Minor differences among real Christians might be turned to good account ; certainly they tend to corroborate the truth of those points on which they all agree : for with such a disposition to vary and to differ, it could be nothing but evident and demonstrative truth that could compel their agreement in the points where they are united. Let us hold by that agreement, and let it bind hearts, as well as unite understandings. You cannot be so sure of the correctness of any opinion that you hold, as you can that a peaceful, healing, and uniting spirit, is the spirit of the Christian religion, and identifies it in your own mind. Cultivate, therefore, a peaceful, healing, and moderating spirit.

Thirdly, and lastly : *Promote, by all proper means, a rational and spiritual reform of all abuses in all means of public instruction.* There are some sins that deserve to be called kingdom-destroyers. Of these, Sabbath-breaking is the chief. God promised the Jews if they would stand by his Sabbaths to

stand by them: they refused, and ruin came on them. It was that which made Nehemiah so warm on the subject, when they returned from Babylon: Hear what he says in Nehemiah, xiii. 17, 18: "Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the Sabbath-day? Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the Sabbath." The recent attempts of the Legislature of this country to effect reform in this matter, whether right or wrong in themselves, elicited those public expressions of disregard of the Sabbath as a holy day, which I cannot but fear have done considerable harm. The writings, too, of blind and ineptuous men on the nature and the obligation of the Christian Sabbath have done much injury: and some weak persons have troubled themselves with this doctrine, in mooted questions on it, which did not deserve to be answered, but the mooted of which caused angry feelings. Not indeed that the real Christian can be injured by any of these things. Does he want to be told that it is a right thing, a good thing, and a blessed thing, to keep holy the first day of the week, baptized in the New Testament with the sacred name of "the Lord's day," in commemoration of his resurrection, ascension, and the down-pouring of the Holy Ghost? No; he finds that just in proportion as he keeps that day holy it goes well with him body and soul.

How natural it is for us to condemn others, and in that condemnation to lose our own sense of censurableness. We inveigh against our neighbours of the continent, for the way in which they break the Sabbath: but I declare that I scarcely saw more shops open in the metropolis of France on the Sabbath day, than in this metropolis, and none of its drunkenness and riotousness in the streets. Young people, I have made some observation myself on this subject, and I hesitate not to say to you, that I scarcely ever knew a young tradesman, or a young man in any profession, who employed a portion of the Sabbath for secular purposes, or for purposes of vanity or pleasure, but what went through life, either with a wound in his conscience, distress in his affairs, or disgrace in his character. Go to Newgate, and how many will tell you that Sabbath-breaking was the first step in their awful career. I think it lies with Christians, by their decided conduct and by their faithful testimony, to effect a reform in this matter; and unless that reform take place in the keeping of the Sabbath day holy amongst us, I cannot but fear some dreadful blow from the Lord of the Christian Sabbath.

Next to that sin among the number of national sins, and premonitions of national judgments, I might mention drunkenness and profane swearing, the two distinctive and hateful vices of Christian England: to these I might add the sin of fornication: but I shall not enter on these disgusting and commonplace matters. Only let us seek a reform in all abuses of this kind in the circle around us: let us not be averse to enter municipal offices and parochial offices for this very purpose: let us be barriers against the torrents of vice in every direction: let us counteract evil with good, and by our example and by our teaching diffuse order, and decency, and good morals, and Christian virtues around the spheres where we dwell: and then, if "the axe" shall come, it shall have less to do amongst us.

Forgive me if I remind you of these things, as I think they remind us of our duty at the present day: Square all things in religion and policy by the Scrip-

tures : Cultivate a peaceful and healing spirit : Promote a quiet, rational, and spiritual reform in the means of public instruction.

But I must draw to a close, and I wish to address you candidly and faithfully. The apostle Paul when speaking to the Hebrews of that shaking of the nations which was to prepare the way for the first spread of Christianity, immediately says, for their comfort and direction, " But we, receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace to serve God with reverence and godly fear." Have you any acquaintance with that kingdom—the kingdom of God that consisteth not in meats and drinks, not in lifeless notions and carnal ceremonies, but which is within us, and consisteth in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost ? O for a spirit of self-examination among us all ! not passing the question over to another, but putting it to your own breasts, " Do I know any thing of the power of religion ? Have I got above a religion of dead forms and party notions ? Have I any experience of peace and joy in the Holy Spirit ?" Many of you have ; what an encouragement to making progress ! God, by uniting you to Jesus Christ through faith, has connected you with the fountain of grace ; and thus you may address yourselves to the performance of all Christian duties with the consciousness of being accepted. What a prospect is before you ! An everlasting kingdom that cannot be shaken by any storm or convulsion, into which nothing shall enter that defileth, or troubleth, or maketh a lie—where the enemy shall never approach, and the friend shall never retire ! That everlasting kingdom shall you have who are converted to God, to whatever name or denomination of Christians you may be attached. Those idle disputes that have been introduced about the final perseverance of the saints, and the certainty of the salvation of God's elect, have laid prostrate the whole hopes of the Church ; they have shut out heaven from the view of the saint. But it should not be thus : every man born of God should anticipate, with humble confidence, founded upon the promises of Scripture, eternal glory ; he should rejoice in hope of the glory of God. The summons to die should never surprise nor frighten the Christian ; he should be on the tip-toe for heaven.

Another of our number has just been taken away from us ; an affectionate wife, and the mother of four dear children, whose minds she had carefully stored with the seeds of divine truth. She lived with her sorrowing partner (who is now present with the dear children) for the space of twelve years, without one solitary instance of discord, so sweet was her spirit. The fatal spasms, in a few days, carried her off. There was no time for preparation : but none was wanting : the soul so prepared needs no delay. It is as ripe fruit upon the tree, that waits but for the gentlest pressure to fall into the owner's lap. How many die as suddenly—how few as safe ! Since her connexion with this church, I am told by her partner (and I have no reason to believe he intended to flatter) that she has eminently enjoyed religion. Her heart was in her religion ; and she was united to the church and the pastor by the closest and most affectionate of bonds. I have lost another voice of prayer for me on earth ; but I have gained another attraction, as the pastor of a Christian society, to the heavenly world ; and I give thanks to God that those whom he has been pleased to remove from us have given the most satisfactory proof that they were prepared to go—that they were ripe for eternity and heaven. We stand in no doubt of the reality and the evidence of their faith ; and that I take to be the best of all.

In that burial-ground in France which all English people go to see, and which they admire on account of its affecting sentimentality, there is no inscription in the whole place, that I could find, making mention of the *religion* of the individuals whose ashes lie there. They are all “good fathers,” “good mothers,” and “good children,” and “good neighbours;” but I could not meet with one that was mentioned as remarkable for religion. But that is the praise of our sister; and the best praise of all that you might write upon her stone is, that she “died in faith,” she “died in the Lord,” and “Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, for they rest from their labours.” Her sacred spirit is happy, full of joy; and nothing in this world could add to her joy like the knowledge of those, so dear to her heart, whom she has left behind, and who were the last, perhaps, in her thoughts when she quitted the world, giving themselves to God.

There are many of you who are not deciding for God: what a mercy that *you* were not taken! What a mercy that those who were suddenly called away were the individuals the most prepared! But the vine-dresser’s prayer has been heard for you—“Let it alone this year also.” But I hope you will remember the condition: “If it bear fruit well; if not, cut it down.” And listen—it is for not bearing *good* fruit, that the tree is to be hewn, and cast into the fire; not for bearing *bad* fruit; it is not for your being immoral, ambitious, and worldly, that you are to be condemned if you die; but it is for your *not bringing forth* good fruit, the fruit of holiness, the fruit of righteousness by faith in Christ, and of good works. Those persons who go from Christ with a “depart,” are not the persons who have injured the poor, and stripped them naked, and cast them into prison: no; but they are the individuals who did *not* comfort them, clothe them, sustain them, and succour them for Christ’s sake, and in love to his name. “Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye did it not to me. Depart.” Therefore, if you die without bringing forth the fruit of righteousness, which is by Jesus Christ, to the praise and glory of God, you are cast into the fire. “Every tree that bringeth *not* forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.”

“We all like forest trees do stand,  
And some are doomed to fall;  
The axe must smite at God’s command,  
And soon shall smite us all.”

Here are some of you that are not converted; your religion is not begun; you are not on the foundation; you are not in Christ. When you began this year, you thought before it closed you would be decided for God; but you are not, even now: there is a spirit of procrastination and delay and trifling in you on this matter, which nothing can eradicate. What warnings have you had! What shakings have you had! How has he smitten you; not in anger surely, but in mercy he has given you tokens of his displeasure; and he has said to you, by all these things, “Because there is wrath, beware lest he take thee away with his stroke; then a great ransom cannot deliver thee.” Do you say, “O, we cannot turn to God; it is no fault of ours that we are not turned?” Will your *consciences* say so? Will you be able to say so at the bar of the Lord Jesus Christ, that it was no fault of your’s? Why then you cannot be lost, unless the fault is to be laid at your door. But what says conscience? “You *will not* pray to God earnestly to turn you. If I could get you to *pray* earnestly and

solemnly to God this night before you retire to rest—if I could but get you now on your knees to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to say to him, “ O God, create within me a new heart! O Lamb of God that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon me, a miserable sinner !” then I should have hope. But you will *not* pray. Then *I* will pray for you; it is all that I can do. Brethren, join me. Men and women of God, lift up your hearts in prayer. There is a Spirit—there is an Almighty Spirit—and Christ has promised to send that Spirit down. He stands waiting for our prayers. Lift up your hearts in silent prayer unto God, that he may send a spirit of seriousness upon us all, and bring conversion into many of our hearts.

And you, dear friends, who have had this stroke of affliction, for you we pray; and pray yourselves; and it shall be found that this is his name—“ A God hearing and answering prayer.” “ Prove me now,” says God, “ prove me ; call upon me ; do not mock me with faint and heartless prayer; prayer that rolls from your tongue, without any corresponding feeling in your mind: but call on me in the day of trouble, and I will hear you and deliver you, and thou shalt glorify me.” And seeing that we have a blessed Mediator, a great High Priest, touched with the feeling of our infirmities, Jesus the Son of God, let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

## REMARKS ON THE REFORMATION.

‘LET us be concerned to make a right improvement of the subject. And can we do this better than, first, in a way of thanksgivings to God ; of whom, and through whom, and to whom, are all things, to whom be glory. From Him all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works do proceed. He turns the hearts of men to any particular purpose, and strengthens their hands for the enterprise. He furnishes the means, and the opportunities for employing them. He blesses the use of them, and insures their success. Let us not forget his works and the wonders which he has shewn us. Let us not induce him to complain of us as he did of Israel ; ‘O my people, what have I done unto thee ? and wherein have I wearied thee ? testify against me. For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servants ; and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. O my people, remember now what Balak, king of Moab, consulted, and what Balaam, the son of Beor, answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal ; that ye may know the righteousness of the Lord.’ ‘Bless the Lord, O my soul : and all that is within me, bless his holy name. O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together.’

‘When we are rais’d from deep distress,  
His love demands a song ;  
We’ll take the tribute of our praise  
From Zechariah’s song’—

And say, ‘Blessed be the Lord God of Israel ; for he hath visited and redeemed his people—that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.’ And let our gratitude be not only practical but fervent. Let it bear some proportion to the vastness of the excitement. What as men, as Britons, as Christians, as Protestants, should we feel for such an inestimable blessedness as the Reformation we this day celebrate ! Who can read Robertson’s account of this interesting event, in his History of Charles V., and not be grieved and offended at the cold manner in which this divine of the Scots Kirk, and this secret friend and admirer too of Hume the sneering infidel, relates what was enough to make an angel burn with rapture, and did inspire a seraph in flesh and blood—Yes, hear the language of the immortal bard who has furnished our isle and our world with its ‘sublimest song.’ ‘When we call to mind at last, after so many dark ages wherein the huge overshadowing train of error had almost swept all the stars out of the firmament of the Church, how the bright and blissful Reformation by Divine power, struck through the black and settled night of ignorance and anti-christian tyranny ;—methinks a sovereign and reviving joy must needs rush into the bosom of him that reads or hears, and the sweet odour of the returning Gospel embathe his soul with the fragrancy of heaven. Then was the sacred Bible sought out of the dusty corners where profane falsehood and neglect had thrown it ; the schools were opened ; divine and human learning raked out of the embers of forgotten tongues. Then the princes and cities were seen trooping apace to the new erected banners of salvation ; and the martyrs, with the unresisted might of weakness, shaking the powers of darkness, and scorning the fiery rage of the

old red dragon.' This is sentiment. This is language becoming the occasion. Let us improve it in revering and cherishing the memory of those who conscientiously acted, and suffered in this noble cause. We are too little sensible of our obligation to these excellent men. They laboured, and we have entered into their labours. And how *did* they labour? Well done, said the Saviour, as he received them into the joy of their Lord, good and faithful servant, thou hast laboured and hast not fainted.

"Nothing offends me more than attempts to lower the reputation of any of these heralds and heroes of salvation. When a fine character comes before me, says a great man, I never take it to pieces. The reformers exerted themselves under many disadvantages, and were only men—but they were men of God, they were men of another world, they were men of faith, and of charity, and self-denial, and invincible fortitude. Placed in their circumstances, would you have done what they achieved? Would you have borne what they endured? 'unto all long-suffering with joyfulness.' 'If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan!'—Why, the sneer of a neighbour, the laugh of a fool, the frown of a relation, the loss of a customer, this, this is sufficient to induce some of you to conceal your principles, or turn aside from the way of righteousness.—But *they* resisted unto blood, striving against sin. *They* loved not their lives unto the death—

' Patriots have toiled, and in their country's cause  
 Bled nobly; and their deeds, as they deserve,  
 Receive proud recompense. We give in charge  
 Their names to the sweet lyre. The historic muse,  
 Proud of the treasure, marches with it down  
 To latest times: and Sculpture, in her turn,  
 Gives bond in stone and ever-during brass  
 To guard them, and immortalize her trust:  
 But fairer wreaths are due, though never paid,  
 To those who, posted at the shrine of Truth,  
 Have fallen in her defence. A patriot's blood,  
 Well spent in such a strife, may earn indeed,  
 And for a time ensure to his loved land,  
 The sweets of liberty and equal laws;  
 But martyrs struggle for a brighter prize,  
 And win it with more pain. Their blood is shed  
 In confirmation of the noblest claim—  
 Our claim to feed upon immortal truth,  
 To walk with God, to be divinely free,  
 To soar, and to anticipate the skies.  
 Yet few remember them. They lived unknown  
 Till Persecution dragg'd them into fame,  
 And chased them up to heaven. Their ashes flew  
 —No marble tells us whither. With their names  
 No bard embalms and sanctifies his song:  
 And History, so warm on meaner themes,  
 Is cold on this. She execrates indeed  
 The tyranny that doomed them to the fire,  
 But gives the glorious sufferers little praise—'"

## PRISONERS OF HOPE.

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REV. D. WILSON, A.M.

ST. MARY'S, ISLINGTON, NOVEMBER 22, 1835.

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"Turn you to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope."—ZECHARIAH, ix. 12.

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THIS chapter contains an interesting prophecy, combining the promise of temporal and spiritual blessings. It foretels the judgments which were coming upon the enemies of Israel, and the dangers and distresses which would be directed against them. It also looks forward to the dispensation of the Gospel, anticipates the spiritual reign of Messiah, and that heavenly protection, and refuge, and support, which would be granted by it.

The gentleness and lowliness of Messiah's character we find described in the ninth verse : "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion ; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem : behold, the King cometh unto thee ; he is just, and having salvation ; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass." The peaceful nature, and the wide extension of his dominion, are next described : "And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle-bow shall be cut off : and he shall speak peace unto the heathen ; and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth." The deliverance which he should grant to mankind from the thraldom and dominion of sin follows : "As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water." And then comes the exhortation of my text, evidently alluding to the same subject, and forming a part of the same spiritual and evangelical address. The prophet turns to captive Israel, and in them to the whole race of mankind, who are to owe their redemption to the same Saviour, the same Messiah, and cries, "Turn you to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope." This, dear brethren, is the language I would desire to employ in addressing you this morning. Prisoners you all are ; prisoners of hope we also are, while life, and health, and Gospel privileges are granted. And I come to offer to each of you a full, and complete, and sufficient refuge, into which you are invited to turn. Let us first, then, in dependence on divine assistance, consider the image under which we are here addressed, and then, secondly, the admonition which is given to us.

Observe, first, THE IMAGE UNDER WHICH WE ARE HERE ADDRESSED : "Prisoners of hope." The prophet could hardly have adopted an expression more expressive or more appropriate. Man, in more senses than one, is a prisoner : all things around him are calculated to remind him that he is not free, that he is not his own master, that he dwells not in the land of perfect

liberty or complete freedom. This earthly body is, in one sense, his prison. The immaterial soul is confined in this narrow cell: weakness, languor, infirmity, debility, all remind him that he is not free, that he is in a state of confinement. The spirit feels its imprisonment, and "groans," as the Apostle says, "being burthened;" it longs to be at liberty, and seeks to soar upward; it hopes, with the Psalmist, "O that I had wings like a dove, that I might flee away and be at rest." But this clay tabernacle detains it: it is clogged with a feeble decaying body, possessed only of limited powers and limited strength. Like a bird which is swift in the wing, confined in a cage, it pines, and pines in vain, to recover its liberty.

But man is also in another sense a prisoner—he is the prisoner of *sin*. These earthly bodies which we carry about with us, are not merely confined and limited in their powers, they are also defiled, and corrupt, and sinful, in their propensities. "God," says the Apostle, "hath concluded," (or in other words hath "shut up") "all under sin." "He that committeth sin is the servant"—is the slave, that is, is the captive—"of sin." Thus we are said to have "our understandings darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in us." "Man," says the Apostle, "has a law in his members, bringing him into captivity to the law of sin which is in his members." Sin drags him down to earth with a constraining force. Man will often, indeed, talk of his freedom and his liberty, and cry, "Our lips are our own: who is lord over us?" But is he therefore really free? A free man, and yet the slave of lust, the slave of his appetites, the slave of his passions! Is his understanding free? Are his affections free? Is his conscience free? Are his hands free? Are his powers of body and mind at liberty to walk in the path of God's command, with a perfect heart? No, brethren; sin is holding dominion over him: sin is chaining down the soul to earth; sin is exercising a mighty, and powerful, and prevailing influence over his heart. The whole race of man (what an affecting, what a touching thought!) the whole race of mankind, formed after the image of God, endued with heavenly powers and spiritual capacities, yet all are under sin; all are condemned; all are under the sentence of divine wrath; all bound by the fetters of corruption, fetters which they can never break, fetters which they can never be free from, until a divine heavenly power bursts the chain and sets the prisoners free.

And then, once more, we are also prisoners, as being *the captives of Satan*. Satan acts the part of a jailor, to guard the prison, and prevent the prisoner from breaking loose. Thus he is called by our Lord, "the strong man armed," and elsewhere, "the prince of the power of the air." Thus man is said to be taken captive by him at his will. Satan is represented as entangling him in his snare, as catching him in his net, as blinding his eyes, and hardening his heart, and preventing one ray of light from entering his soul; and thus holding him in the bondage of corruption. True it is that Satan gilds the chain, and deludes the man with vain appearances of liberty. The worldling boasts that he is his own master, and professes to pity the servant of God, who is debarred and confined from pleasures which he enjoys. But, brethren the reverse of this is really the case: the man of this world is really the prisoner, the slave, the deluded victim. The Christian, he is the man that has escaped the snare of the fowler, and is now free from the snare.

But the prophet speaks to us in my text, further, as "prisoners of *hope*."

Prisoners still ; in confinement still ; but with the prospect of release and encouragement. Such was the case with Israel's captives. Prisoners they had long been, confined for seventy years in Babylon, and banished from their own land. But they were prisoners of hope. "There is hope in thine end," saith the Lord, "that thy children shall come again to their own border." Many of these captives, at the command of the king of Babylon, had already been permitted to burst their chain and return to Jerusalem, while others were preparing to imitate their example, and rebuild and reinhabit the waste places. Such, in a spiritual sense, is the state of all to whom life is continued, and the day of grace is prolonged. They are prisoners indeed—but they are prisoners of hope. For remember, beloved brethren, there are those who are prisoners *without* hope ; there are those who are prisoners of despair. The fallen angels, who kept not their first estate, and are reserved in everlasting chains unto darkness for the judgment of the great day, they, like ourselves, are prisoners ; "spirits," as the Apostle says, "in prison :" but they are prisoners, not of hope, but of despair. No message of mercy comes to them ; no assurance of deliverance is vouchsafed to them ; no strong hold is pointed out to them into which to turn. The impenitent sinner, likewise, he who has resisted the calls of mercy, who has passed into the eternal world unsaved and unsanctified, ceases, in like manner, to be a prisoner of hope, and becomes a prisoner of despair. The dark portals of death transfer him from the land of hope to the land of unutterable darkness, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

But in this life we are all prisoners of hope. "The grave," says Hezekiah, "cannot praise thee ; death cannot celebrate thee : they that go down to the grave cannot hope for thy truth. The *living*, the *living*, he shall praise thee, as I do this day." But more especially where the sound of the Gospel comes, where the news of the Saviour is proclaimed, all who hear the message are particularly and pre-eminently the prisoners of hope. We are commissioned, brethren, to proclaim to you a Saviour who is the hope of all the ends of the earth. We have been expressly sent to proclaim liberty to the captive, and the opening of the prison to them who are bound. Delightful is the announcement which we bring to every son and daughter of Adam. There is not an individual, brethren, who walks this earth—much less is there an individual who is in this house of God this morning, who is not in this sense a prisoner of hope. Be his sin never so great, be his transgression never so heinous ; yet let him not yield to despair. Long, it may be, he has been the prisoner of sin, the prisoner of Satan, the prisoner of his own corrupt appetites and passions ; yet still may hope enter, still may the voice of mercy gain admission. Know, brethren, that Christ is exalted as a prince and a Saviour : know, sinner, for thy comfort, whoever and wherever thou art, that a door of hope is provided, that a fountain for sin is opened, and that Christ is standing at the door and knocking. Yes, the day of grace has not yet passed ; the door of hope is not yet closed ; you are not yet a prisoner of despair, if only you employ the present moment to seek and return to your God.

But then, further than this, those who by divine grace have been brought back to God, who have been delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son, such are, in a still more distinct and peculiar manner, the prisoners of hope. Fettered indeed, they still are with a

feeble body and corrupt heart. Free they are not, while carrying about with them the body of this death; but they are cheered, and stimulated, and animated, by hope. The Gospel of a crucified Saviour has brought to them hope: a ray of hope, and light, and peace, and joy, has gleamed in, burst through, as it were, the very gratings of their prison—that hope which is as an anchor to the soul both sure and steadfast. Wherever a penitent sinner has been brought to a sense of sin, has been led to fly to Christ, has obtained an interest in him—there is a prisoner of hope. Every promise of Scripture brings him hope; every view of the power, and love, and grace, of Christ communicates hope: every providential mercy of his God enkindles hope: he hopes even unto death. Languor and disease, sorrow and trouble, infirmity and sickness, cannot weaken and destroy his hope: nay, the approach of old age, and death itself, only tends to brighten, and enlarge, and elevate, his hope. The hour of dissolution, that solemn moment, which transfers the impenitent sinner from the prison of hope to the prison of despair, becomes to him the messenger of peace and of joy, and of comfort, bringing to him on its wings, a hope full of immortality, opening to him the prison door, and introducing him to the glorious liberty of the children of God.

But, secondly, what is THE ADMONITION which is given in my text to such? “Turn you to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope.” The language is evidently that of *earnest solicitation*. Imminent peril is threatened. The flying captives who have thus escaped their prison, are in danger of being seized and retaken by the enemy; and here is an impregnable fortress opened into which they are invited to turn.

We can have no hesitation in applying this language to Christ: “The Lord,” says the prophet Micah, “The Lord is God, a strong hold in the day of trouble.” “A man,” says Isaiah, speaking of Christ, “A man shall be a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest.” “Thou,” says David, “thou art my hiding-place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance.” Whatever the dangers which threaten these prisoners of hope, in Christ a sure and effectual protection is found. Does the prisoner of hope fear and exceedingly dread the righteous anger of God? Is he alarmed at that storm of just retribution which hovers over his head? Here is a refuge, here is a strong hold—Christ the advocate with the Father. Sin has been pardoned and justice satisfied by his atonement; mercy and love are extended to the culprit for his sake. Yea, the very oath of Jehovah himself is granted, that they might have strong consolation who have fled to this refuge. Does the sinner dread the requirements of a broken law? Christ has fulfilled its demands and complied with its every requirement; and here is a full and complete righteousness prepared for him. Or again, does he dread the assaults of Satan? “When his enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him.” Satan himself has been vanquished by Christ. No weapon formed against him who is the disciple of Christ shall prosper. This strong hold is safe, is impregnable from their attacks. Or does he again dread the sorrows, and troubles, and afflictions of life? Here again he is permitted to cast his burden upon the Lord: he is privileged to believe that all things shall work together for his good. Yea he can even rejoice in the Lord, and be glad in the God of his salvation amid

the wreck of earthly things, and the agitations, and confusions, and troubles, and disorders, of every earthly convulsion. Mark the language of the Psalmist when sheltered in this refuge, when safely lodged in this strong hold : " God," he cries, " God is our refuge and strength, therefore will we not fear though the earth be removed, and though the waters be carried into the midst of the sea." Or finally, does the poor prisoner shrink back from the prospect of death, and does he dread and shudder at the last enemy of man ? Even here, even against this difficulty has Christ provided a remedy; for he has extracted the sting of death ; he has despoiled the enemy, and caused him to lose his power of injury, and become but the opening of the prison door to the blessings, and life, and joy, of Christ.

But in order to render available this strong hold, it must be actually entered. All other refuges and sources of relief must be relinquished and abandoned. All other posts (to carry on the metaphor) must be forsaken, and relinquished as untenable, and the sinner must fly to Christ, and him alone, as a refuge. As Noah of old fled for refuge to the ark when the overflowing waters were about to cover the earth: as the man-slayer was directed to fly to the city of refuge lest the avenger of blood should overtake him: or as Lot fled when the brimstone and fire overwhelmed the cities of the plain: so in like manner must the trembling sinner fly to Christ : every other refuge is a refuge of lies : he must come and repose his all in Christ alone.

Need I remind you, dear brethren, how loath the heart of man is to do this ; how readily man catches at this and that, and the other earthly support, and clings to that as his refuge ? How unwilling he is to renounce them all, and discard them all, and cast them all away, and fly to Christ alone. The struggle is sometimes long, the struggle is sometimes severe. The man clings to the earth ; earthly ties and earthly hopes entwine themselves about him, and he cannot resolve to quit them. The constraining influence of divine grace can alone cause the prisoners of hope to turn to this strong hold. When the Spirit of God begins to work within, when the power of the Holy Ghost begins to open the eyes, and awaken the heart, and turn the soul, then it is that the sinner begins to see the insufficiency of his earthly supports : then it is that he is driven off, first from one post and then from another, until he relinquishes them all, and by faith lays hold on Christ. Here is the open door : here he clings with firm, and safe, and secure, grasp ; he rejects all his vain confidence, and cries with Israel of old, " Asshur shall not save us ; we will not ride upon horses : neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods : for in thee" pre-eminently, in thee distinctively, " the fatherless findeth mercy."

And now am I speaking to any who feel uninterested in this momentous subject ; any who are still exposed to the perils of eternal punishment, and yet have never sought, have never inquired after any refuge ? Allow me plainly, yet most affectionately, to speak to such. My subject, dear brethren, addresses you ; it reminds you of your peril and it points out to you a way of escape. It calls you " prisoners ;" perhaps you may be tempted to doubt the propriety of this application. You feel free and active ; you deem yourselves at liberty ; but are you really free ? I say, are you really free ? Look at these frail decaying bodies in which you are shut up : think of that propensity to sin which you must feel ; reflect upon the shortness of life and the uncertainty of earthly hopes, and the nearness of eternity. You say that you are free ; but I ask,

can you calculate upon one single hour? You call yourselves the sons and daughters of liberty, and say, with the Jews of old, "We were never in bondage to any man;" and yet sin is enslaving you; and yet pleasure is engrossing you; and yet the world is chaining you down with its iron fetters, and preserving you in its powerful, its adamantine bonds.

And then, as to the future, what are your prospects? What security is there? You know not how soon your prison doors may be opened, and you led forth as a criminal to execution. You know not how soon you may cease to be a prisoner of hope, and become a prisoner of despair. O trifle not with the present season, trifle not with your present advantages: but now we invite you to Christ; now we call on you to wake from your slumber, and shake off your chain, and to seek after that liberty wherewith Christ makes his people free. "Turn you to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope." Look not to this deluding world: rest not in the doubtful and insecure position: but now, while life lasts; now, while the door of mercy is open; now, while the gospel message is sounding in your ears; now, while we are privileged still to address you as prisoners of hope—O fly to the place of refuge: O take shelter in the arms of a gracious and almighty Saviour: O come and seek protection under the wings of mercy, and seek a refuge from the coming storm.

And to you, beloved brethren, who *have* fled for refuge, I need only say, Abide in it; keep close to Christ; suffer not Satan or the world to tempt you from your refuge, out of Christ. If you are only in him, nothing in time or eternity can hurt you. "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." Satan cannot hurt you; sin shall not have dominion over you. You have a refuge from every storm; you have a retreat from every tempest; you have a covert from every attack. Let your trials, and sorrows, and afflictions drive you nearer to Christ: let the very assaults of Satan only drive you closer to Christ: let the sense of the weakness and frailty of this earthly body, and these uncertain props, lead you to lean more simply, more entirely, more freely, more unreservedly on him. Prisoners ye are; but prisoners of hope. Soon shall you be released from the bondage of corruption: soon will this prison-house, this earthly tabernacle, be dissolved. Then, indeed, you will be confined awhile in the prison-house of the grave; but even there ye are prisoners of hope. The decaying remains of the Christian believer are the remains of a prisoner, but of a prisoner of hope. You descend into the narrow confines of the grave; but with a hope full of immortality. The voice of the archangel and the trump of God shall summon forth and call up the imprisoned dust, and then shall you be summoned to an unchanging state of immortal liberty and endless joy.

## THE FULNESS OF THE GOSPEL.

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REV. J. HAMBLETON, A.M.

CHAPEL OF EASE, HOLLOWAY, NOVEMBER 22, 1833

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"And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ."—ROMANS, xv. 29.

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WE are at length come, through the good providence of God, to the evening of the last Sunday in our ecclesiastical year. Next Sunday, if God permit, we enter on the animating topics connected with the second advent of Christ. To-night it may be good and profitable to endeavour to take a somewhat connected view of the various subjects brought before us from time to time under the ministry of the Gospel, and consider what is that "fulness of the Gospel" with which the Apostle desired, expected, and felt confident he should be able to visit the Christians at Rome. This subject may, with the blessing of God, be truly useful to all of us, to minister and to people. It may help the minister to consider that solemn question, which ought to come before his mind from time to time, Do I, as a minister, habitually desire to come among the people to whom I am sent, in the spirit in which Paul here declared he desired to visit the Christians at Rome? The same subject may help you, my Christian friends, to consider what use you make of that same Gospel of which the Apostle thus speaks.

Our subject was originally intended for a people to whom the Gospel of Christ was now no longer strange. They to whom he is writing his epistle, had heard the Gospel; many of them had received the Gospel, and were adorning it in their daily walk. Yet they all needed the Gospel still, both the written and the preached word. The Apostle had written to them a long and beautiful epistle, which contains one of the clearest and richest exhibitions of divine truth which can be found in the whole of the Sacred Volume; where you see that they who already knew the Gospel, have occasion still to study their Bibles, that their knowledge may be enlarged, and deepened, and expanded; yet still again and again in the course of it the Apostle expresses a most anxious desire to come personally among them in the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel, to open his own heart; to explain, in part or entirely, the divine message; to enlighten the ignorant, to stir up the careless, to encourage the timid, to strengthen the weak, to console, animate, and edify the true believer.

Such was his desire in wishing to visit the Church at Rome. To the eye of man by nature the Apostle's visit to that place may seem but a small event, a mere matter of chance, and to be of no great consequence whether he went or not: but to the eye of faith which, in the midst of seeming changes, sees whe

within wheel at work, all guided by infinite wisdom, in perfect harmony to one great and glorious end—the Apostle's coming to Rome was connected with the fulness of the blessing of Christ's Gospel, and might prove a far more important event than any connected with the famous history of that city and empire: for the salvation of precious and immortal souls might be most deeply concerned, and though I hope we know and feel our immense inferiority to him, yet as we have the same Gospel to preach, the same mercy to set forth, and the promise that his grace should not stop at the apostles, but be granted to all his faithful ministers to the end of the world, we may, and ought, to feel that it may please our God to glorify himself in the weakness of the means he uses, to make us instruments in saving sinners from eternal misery, and so, in adding, if it may be, but one jewel more to the bright splendour of the diadem of the Messiah. I hope never to forget the advice which I once heard given in a sermon addressed to students in divinity: “ Whenever you sit down to compose a sermon, never forget that the salvation of a soul for eternity may (under God) depend on that very sermon.” The thought humbles while it encourages.

The spirit in which the Apostle was sure he should come to Rome is, then, our subject. It is one from which all of us have much to learn. We are too apt to take up with speculative views, a mere notion of the Gospel, and then to imagine we know it all. We are sometimes ready to compare what we hear with what we know already, instead of enlarging, deepening, and ramifying that knowledge into all its proper scriptural heads.

We must begin with the fulness of the *misery* of the lost, ruined state of sinful men: for these two points are intended to proceed together: the fulness of the blessing of Christ was designed to meet the fulness of the misery of lost, ruined men. If you stop and hesitate, as thousands do, at the one—at the fallen state of man—you cannot enter aright into the other. Though God is infinite, he does not, if I may so speak, waste the exertion of his perfections. Even at the Deluge, that mighty exertion of divine power, as soon as the object designed was accomplished, God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters assuaged. So if God has provided a “ fulness of blessing” in the Gospel of Christ, I am quite sure there must have been a fulness of misery in the lost and ruined state of sinful men. Look first at our original corruption; what a fruitful source is that of moral depravity! What torrents of wickedness have flown, and are flowing, from that fountain of evil! Read, if you have doubts, what Scripture says of original sin: “ Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me :” “ Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one :” “ The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born :” “ That which is born of the flesh is flesh.” We are “ by nature children of wrath.” Then read the ninth article of your Church; see what is the doctrine of your own Church as to this point: “ Original sin,” it tells you, “ is the fault and corruption of the nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam; whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the spirit; and therefore, in every person born into this world it deserveth God's wrath and damnation.” Then read your own hearts: survey them, not in the deceitful mirror of your own opinions, but in the faithful mirror of God's word. Has all been pure, holy, spotless there? Have no corrupt desires, no unholy imaginations, no evil pro-

pensities been found there! Your consciences give the answer. Then the doctrine of original sin is too true. There are no such unholy desires ever arising in the souls of men once truly delivered from original sin. This union continues till the house infected with this leprosy is pulled down; till they drop into the grave the sin-stained garments of the flesh and their souls, washed in the blood of Jesus, escape to heaven.

But original sin is not the only charge which the Bible brings against us; it is not the only one which "the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ" is designed to meet. Original sin in our nature, has broken out into actual sin in our lives. I do not, for I cannot, and if I could I would not, particularize all your sins: that will be work for God himself in another and a greater day than this, unless in that day they shall be all blotted out in the blood of the Lamb, and completely covered with his righteousness; though even then some have thought the mantle will be lifted up for a little time, and the sins brought to light magnify the riches of the grace of God in pardoning them. But however it may be then, the Gospel, with its fulness of blessing, finds you, and addresses you as sinners who have, again and again, in thought, word, and deed, rebelled against God. Take the holy law; how readest thou? "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, mind, and strength." Then inquire with yourselves, "Have I done this? Have I loved the Lord my God—the Lord as my God—with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength? If I love God, since God is a Spirit, I must love him for his spiritual character. And what is that? He is holy: do I love him for his holiness? He is just: do I love him for his justice, for his purity, for his omniscience, for his power?" Then the law continues: "And thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." How strict is this law! It requires us to love our neighbour as ourselves: then there is no room left in the law for all those selfish acts which man's notice cannot reach, and which man, therefore, pronounces innocent. If not satisfied yet as to personal sinfulness as a transgressor, take the commandments of God one by one: consider their meaning, their wide, spiritual, holy meaning, as explained by Christ himself; which meaning was not newly introduced by him, as some may imagine. The last of all the commandments, "Thou shalt not covet," gives a wide, and close, and spiritual meaning to all the others. If the commandment says, "Thou shalt not covet," then the desire to commit fraud, or injury, or unholiness, in any shape, is a transgression of the law: and what is that but sin?

Then, if you will but seriously consider, you will find that sin appears not only in the nature, but in the very actual life of every one amongst you. Our sins, we shall discover, are more in number than the hairs of our head. Were each of us to count, honestly and truly, all the sins we have committed, we should see the next Sabbath morning dawn on us before we finished the enumeration. Then how many have we forgotten; how many are occasionally by circumstances called to our minds! How innumerable must the whole mass of all our sins appear in the eyes of Him who has seen them all, to whom all things are open!

We have not yet reached the full extent of the wants and misery of man. Sin deserves condemnation. "The wages of sin is death;" "The soul that sinneth it shall die." This is no new law; it was given to Adam; it has been repeated again and again. We see the temporal part of the sentence fulfilled

every day in the death of those around us. we cannot say, therefore, we have been taken by surprise when death shall come also to us. Sinner, the next time you sin, you cannot say you were never told "the wages of sin" of *all* sin, of that sin which you are about to commit, "is death," and that "death has passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Even in this life we see sentence on the soul almost or quite begun. "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." What solid peace, what lasting comfort, can you find in sin? There is no spiritual joy, no holy communion with God, no delight in his perfections, no praise for his goodness, no safety for a single day, no security, no happiness. Do you not see something of that awful sentence passed on the sinner already begun—"Your iniquities have separated between you and God" already: you have been "dead in trespasses and sins" already: you have need of the exhortation, "Awake thou that sleepest, arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee life."

But though we have thus seen man in the depth of misery, through original corruption and actual sin, also in danger of eternal condemnation, and with the sentence of spiritual banishment from God begun to be executed, we have not yet fathomed the misery of ruined man: he is blind to this his miserable state, and has no power of himself to help or deliver himself. Fools make a mock at sin: that proves their blindness as to its guilt. Angels in heaven can, perhaps, guess what sin is, in contrast with the beauty of holiness; but you never read that they make a mock of sin. The devils in hell understand what sin is by feeling its bitter consequences; and yet never do we read that they make a mock at sin, though they succeed in enticing men to do it.

And then, man cannot help or redeem himself. He says, indeed, flippantly and boldly, "I can repent when I will, and then all will be safe." You can repent when you will? Then why have you never decided to do it? Show that you can repent by truly forsaking and never returning again to sin. There he hesitates or plainly refuses. That corrupt will, therefore, must be turned; and God will turn it. We have prayed for this to-day, that God would "stir up the *wills* of his faithful people"—a prayer that needs the assurance of Scripture, that it is "God that worketh in us to *will* and to do of his good pleasure." Christ is "exalted to give repentance." It must be stated, therefore, and received as a gift: "Without me ye can do nothing."

It is true, indeed, that every one, if asked the question, "Do you wish to be saved? Do you wish to go to heaven?" would reply, "Of course I do." But when we shew what is meant by being saved from sin and the service of the flesh, from the corrupt following of a vain world, how many are there who shrink back in heart, who delay, postpone, procrastinate, from youth to manhood, and from manhood to old age; "resolve, and re-resolve, and die the same." Thus the condition of man after the fall of Adam, as another article of our Church declares, "is such that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and good works, to faith and calling upon God."

You may think I have been drawing a gloomy picture in shewing that you are, by original and actual sin, guilty before God, deserving of eternal misery, unable to save yourselves, and without any true desire to be saved at all. Is this the Gospel? Can this be "the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ?" It is: because such was your state, that such a Gospel, with such a fulness of blessing was needed. The sick man, who denies that he is very ill,

will not send for the physician, nor take the remedy that will save him. Throw a piece of gold in the street before swine, and they will trample it under foot: give it to a poor, hungry man, and he is thankful for it; buys food and warm clothing. Such is the Saviour in the Gospel to those who feel their need of him. He is to them the "pearl of great price;" to such his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood drink indeed. To those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, his righteousness is a robe to clothe those who feel that their righteousness is as filthy rags.

We have no wish to overstate the wretchedness of man. It is a most humiliating subject, and we who speak of it have been involved in the very same condemnation, and to the same extent with you. We have all of us been overtaken by the same storm, wrecked on the same rocks, been led captive by the same tyrant: we might sit down by the same streams, and hang up our harps on the same willows whilst we weep over our common miseries. But to us so guilty, so helpless, so estranged from God in heart, the Gospel of Christ speaks, and offers "the fulness of its blessing" to meet this and all other wants of man. The primary thing needed is to remove our natural blindness as to guilt and danger. The Gospel proceeds upon this: when the Holy Spirit is come "he will convince the world of sin." He works by applying the word of God in the heart and conscience. "Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" There is power in the Spirit to apply the divine word, whilst an ample provision is made for influencing any mind, however dark or ignorant—for subduing any corruption, however strong—for enlightening any will, however obstinate and perverse. Only *try*, and you will find it thus.

It is by this means that sinners are brought to understand and feel their guilt and danger. By this means, the Spirit applying the word, three thousand on the day of Pentecost were pricked in their hearts, and said, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" This opened the heart of Lydia to "attend to the things which were spoken of Paul." This softened the stern jailer at Philippi, one moment about to destroy himself, body and soul, for ever—the next crying out, "What shall I do to be saved?" This has before humbled the pride of infidels, stopped the careless and the worldling, convinced the self-righteous, undeceived the presumptuous, and brought thousands to attend to that Gospel which once they despised. Is any thing too hard for the Lord? O my fellow-sinners, pray for the Holy Spirit, and think upon the word of God. The very willingness to pray is a pledge of many good and excellent gifts from above: "I will pour upon David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication."

Then there is full provision in the same Gospel for keeping the sinner, now silenced and convinced, from sinking into despair. For the same gracious Spirit who "convinces men of sin," also "takes of the things of Jesus, and shows them unto us." "Come unto me, all ye that are heavy laden," the Holy Spirit bids us hear the Saviour say. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money: come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price." "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." Hear the force of the full and free pardon burst upon the trembling and convinced sinner. Man cannot save us: every man is a sinner, and himself needs a Saviour: could we find a per-

fect man, his righteousness would only save himself: the law would still say to us, "My demand is on *thee*." An angel cannot save us; he is not infinite: he is holy, and therefore he is happy; but he has no merit to spare for us; you cannot find Scripture to assert that he has. But Christ, my fellow-sinners, can: Christ, the Scripture testifies, is "able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him." He is God, one with the Father; hence possessed of infinite perfection, infinite excellence, dignity, and merit, he became man. Who can measure the depth of that condescension? For a prince or a king to come down from his throne, and become a beggar, were nothing compared with that condescension. There was infinite worth in his being one of us—when in man's nature he completely obeyed the moral law, which every sinner is bound to obey, but which all others have transgressed—when he fully complied with the requirements of the ceremonial law, which was at that time binding on the Jews—when he obeyed the mediatorial law, to which he voluntarily subjected himself: there was an infinity of merit, an accumulation of all that was good, holy, and perfect, in the sight of God. His death was not the whole, but the consummation, of all his obedience. The moral law had no dominion in him, or his person: but since he had subjected himself to the mediatorial law and personated sinners, it demanded his death the wages of their sins, of their sins for whom he undertook: "the wages of sin is death;" consequently he died. The ceremonial law said in its meaning, "Without shedding of blood there is no remission: if then as Mediator you undertook to fulfil the ceremonial law, your blood must be shed." Accordingly he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter; he died the just for the unjust to bring us to God.

Now all this merit, this infinite accumulation of merit, is made to you as far as is needful for your full pardon and justification before God. It is thus made over to any of you, to all of you who, truly humbled for sin by the Holy Spirit, are led by the same Spirit to Jesus, and through the grace of the same Spirit blessing the Word of God (for faith cometh by hearing) accept of Jesus, and trust him as their only propitiation. In this you must not forget that the Spirit works continually by the word: "Search the Scriptures, for they testify of Christ." Many think it an easy thing to believe in Jesus; whereas it is a divine work, requires all the powers of the inner man to be set to work; requires conscience to do its work, the judgment to be exercised, the affections to be mortified, the whole soul to cast itself on him for salvation. With the divine word testifying so fully of the worth and sufficiency of Jesus—with the divine Spirit promised continually to "work in us to will and to do of his good pleasure," with the assurance that Jesus ever liveth (though he died once) to make intercession for us, that he hears every sigh for help, that he strengthens the beginnings of faith, repentance, and love, in our hearts; there is abundant encouragement for us in this work.

Look then to it. How beautiful the words "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Be encouraged by the scriptural instance of Christ promising paradise to the dying thief—bidding the woman who had been a sinner to "go in peace"—declaring that the poor publican went down to his house "justified"—casting seven devils out of Mary Magdalen—and saving the very chief of sinners.

You who are oppressed, who are brought to feel you are sinners, who often

weep in secret for sin, who have felt its bitterness, who are weary with the vanities of the world, and have experienced the unfeeling mockery of the men of the world; let me persuade you to think much, to read much, of the infinite merit and sufficiency of Jesus. With the word of his grace for your authority, and with his Spirit for your present help, believe on him. It is as much your duty as it is your privilege: and thus you will gain sweet and solid peace, that tear of penitential sorrow shall be wiped away to make room for tears of gratitude. You shall yet be happy; your hearts shall yet be glad: for this very night, thus receiving Christ, you may lie down in peace with God and with your own consciences; your slumbers may be sweet and pleasant; and when you wake up, whether it be on earth or heaven, you shall find God very near to you.

In bringing thus the sinner to be reconciled to God, surely we see the fulness of blessing provided for him in the gift of Christ, through him by the Spirit, and, as the channel of our instruction, the holy Word. Here again what copiousness and richness, what a fulness of the blessings of the Gospel is found! What simple parables, what instructive histories, what heavenly doctrines, what holy exhortations, what solemn warnings! Surely the expression of one of the fathers of the church regarding the Scriptures, though strong, is not too strong, when he said "I adore the fulness of the Scriptures."

Then from this view you must glance (though we can do little more than glance) to the view now presented of the Father himself, of the great Author of salvation, who freely gave such a Son to die for sinners, who receives them back as his dear children, and for his sake freely forgives and loves them henceforth with a father's love, and guards them with a father's care! What mean our hard thoughts of God? He has not deserved this at our hands: "God is love;" that is the name by which he ought to be known amongst us. All that is hard and miserable comes from sin and ourselves: all that is good and lovely, all grace and mercy, all hope and true joy, come from the free and unmerited mercy of God in Christ Jesus. "By his grace ye are saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." Who can thus know God, and thus murmur against him? Have they no compunctions of heart who have slighted so good and gracious a God? How is it that the blasphemer against God, is not ashamed even to let his fellow-creatures know that he has no inward sense of the astonishing love of God? When he again dares to profane that holy name, I wonder that his voice does not falter down into whispers; and that those whispers do not sink into thoughts; and that at those thoughts he does not start with abhorrence of their ingratitude towards the best of beings.

But, brethren, the fulness of the blessings of the Gospel is not yet fully described. Think of its connexion with holiness of heart and of life. Thus coming to Christ there will be a real and true change produced in your views of sin, and in your sense of the obligations of holiness; you are brought under the constraining influence of the love of God; you are enlisted under a new captain; you feel now an inward aversion between your hearts and iniquity, and a longing desire after full conformity to Christ. Henceforward the few and scanty services which once satisfied will not content you. The abstaining from grosser sins, and then resting satisfied that you are good enough, is no longer your thought. Your life, your temper, your conversation, all mark the

commencement of the inward work of grace. Every day you seek to grow in grace ; even your short-comings humble you ; and the detection of inward corruption now causes a more acute sense of grief than the knowledge of gross sins causes to the ungodly. The Spirit and the Word are thus seen at work within you. The Spirit sanctifies as well as leads to Jesus ; and he sanctifies by the continued application of the word : hence prayer for his grace is still your resource and delight. Prayer is not only the means of telling your Father in heaven how you rely on his promises and rejoice in his mercy ; but it is further the applying continually to the merits of Jesus, and seeking from day to day, and from hour to hour, the needed supply of the sanctifying, strengthening, comforting, influences of the Holy Spirit, amid all the exigencies of the christian life. My brethren, it must be, and will be, visible this week, and every succeeding week of your lives, whether you have indeed received the Gospel of Christ in the fulness of the blessing as it is now offered you. Your prayers, your works, your thoughts, your actions, must lead to God (and in many ways to man also), to God, whose you are, and whom you serve. The spirit and temper in which you perform the common duties of your station, whether you be high or low, young or old, rich or poor, must ever form an evidence whether you practically know any thing of "the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ." Therefore, if you have a full Gospel preached to you, you must give to God, as the least and poorest return you can make, a full and entire heart. The former leads to the latter ; just as a tree full of vigorous sap, is a tree that will put forth strong branches, and yield abundant fruit. The Christian in name only—I mean the Christian who is neither humbled for sin, nor conscious of weakness, nor led by the Spirit, nor trusting in Jesus, nor loving God, nor bringing forth fruit to holiness—is a tree without sap, which has the shape of a tree, and the name of a tree, but bears no graceful leaves in spring, no sweet fruit in autumn ; which neither pleases the master's eye, nor adorns his vineyard ; which only cumbers the ground, and is fit only to be cut down for the burning.

But does the thought arise, may I not fall away and return to sin ; and then will not my guilt be fearfully increased ? This fear keeps some back from the profession of the Gospel ; and I fear it deters some from going into the meaning of the Gospel, for their own possession and enjoyment. Beware of the evil heart of unbelief ; there is greater danger in not coming to Christ at all, than there is of falling away from Christ, when truly come to him. Keep close to him by the inward help of his Holy Spirit applying his word, and then you are safe ; and there are many promises to surround and guard, and preserve you. In order to keep you close, Christ has promised to intercede for you, that your faith fail not ; but that his holy Father may keep through his own name, those whom he has given him. Does this encourage presumption ? Far from it : to be kept by God is to be kept humble, diligent, and watchful : it is to have the word, as well as the promise, constantly applied : it is to be kept continually taking heed in the way of all holy diligence, lest you fall. Distrust, then, not the Saviour. Having begun a good work in you, he is both able and willing to carry it on to perfection. He will be as able and willing to-morrow as to-day. Is the child that has good parents always fearing all day long lest they should forsake him ? Yea, they *may* forsake him ; we have heard of fathers, and even of mothers, abandoning their offspring : but never

yet did God forsake his reconciled and adopted child. He made Peter feel his own weakness : he makes them all, more or less, so understand the ingratitude of their remaining sin and unbelief : he shews them how easy it would be, if he were to withdraw his grace from them, to fall back into sin : but soon they mourn his absence ; they fly now to the Saviour ; they wrestle for the return of the Holy Spirit ; and soon the cloud disappears, the sun shines forth, and the heart is filled with gratitude for restoring and preserving mercies.

Thus, brethren, in all the spiritual and temporal trials of life, you shall have “the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel” growing and expanding within you : “as is your day, so shall your strength be.” I cannot foretell how many or how great may be your troubles : but one thing I know—for every trial that can befall you, there is, if you will only seek it in the appointed way, an abundant supply of grace provided in “the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ.” Yea, when called to what is commonly considered man’s greatest trial, to pass out of time into eternity, to die, and go before the judgment-seat of Christ, even *then* there are kind promises contained in this Gospel, calculated to cheer the soul when flesh and when heart are failing. Then you will be enabled again to think of “the fulness of the blessing of this Gospel :” again to remember how Christ has died the just for the unjust, has tasted death, has taken away the sting of death : again you will cast yourselves on Christ, pray for his Spirit, think on his word, and look up to God, to whom you are going, as your God and Father. In the words of a pious Christian of another land and of another age, who used often in health to think and to say what he would do when death, when the long wished for chariot should come to fetch him home, across the margin of the river of life—“Then I wash myself once more quite clean in the blood of Jesus, put on again my white garments of the righteousness of Jesus Christ, and so I seat myself in the chariot, and get home.” There we stop ; I must scale heaven, and penetrate eternity, and shew you the fulness of pleasures at God’s right hand for evermore, were I to attempt to complete the description of “the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel.” Then make it yours by your own happy experience. I invite you all, I entreat you all to do this. Surely the unsearchable riches of the fulness of the blessings of eternity are not things to be despised. God alone can tell who among you are opposed to it or not. We ministers know, for our encouragement, that his word shall prosper in the thing whereto he sends it ; but whether it shall prosper in this thing or that, we must leave to God and to your consciences to determine. Yet I may wish, you must allow me to wish, and to exhort, and to pray for every one of you, that you do not neglect so great a salvation so mercifully offered.

Let, then, this be our inquiry this week, Is this the Gospel which you hear preached among you from advent to advent, from one year’s end to another, in its form and in its substance ? How serious, how important a consideration ! Happy for the minister if, after much self-examination and prayer, lest he deceive himself, he has the witness of his own conscience that, with much imperfection and infirmity, yet he desires not to keep back from you any part of “the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel.” How important, again, is your consequent responsibility ; how great is your privilege, yea, how inestimable your happiness, if the fulness of the blessing of this Gospel be indeed yours ! Surely it is your wish that it should be continued to be thus ministered to you.

My last remark, therefore, is, if you desire ministers to come among you more and more in the fulness of the blessing of this Gospel, you must offer up many prayers on our behalf. The enemy of souls will keep us, if he can, from bringing before you this Gospel, which would make you so happy, and save you from his snare. One single praying Christian is a better friend to any minister than a hundred censorious critics, or a thousand idle flatterers. But I cannot urge this more earnestly, or in more affecting words, than in those which immediately succeed our text, and with these I conclude : “ Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me.”

## PEACE IN CHRIST.

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HON. AND REV. B. W. NOEL, A.M.

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"These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."—JOHN, xvi. 33.

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IT was most gracious in our blessed Lord, to employ the last hours of the last evening which he spent with his disciples before his crucifixion, in thus administering to them repeated consolation. His whole ministry on earth was a ministry of peace. His entrance into the world was announced as bringing peace; and upon his entrance on the ministry, he declared that his mission was "to bind up the broken heart." In his first discourse, recorded by St. Matthew, he occupied himself in describing the way in which, in this world, the poor might be blessed. When he first prayed with his disciples after his resurrection, his earliest words were, "Peace be unto you." When he finally ascended to his glory, and was thus separated from them with respect to his personal presence, it was not before he lifted up his hands upon them, blessed them, and gave them consolation. And thus, on this occasion, the last words of his discourse, on that evening of suffering and sorrow to himself, were, "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace."

He had repeatedly assured them that it was his intention that they should enjoy peace. "Peace I leave with you," he says, in the fourteenth chapter, "my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." In the fifteenth chapter he declares, "These things I have spoken unto you that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." And in the sixteenth chapter he assures them again, "Ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." It was most merciful in our gracious Saviour thus, in that hour when he was entering on a sorrow that has no parallel, to divert his attention from his own sufferings to console them under theirs. He who needed that an angel should minister unto him, and console him in his agony; he who said, when entering into that agony, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death," how much more worthy of consideration and regard his own feelings were than theirs. He had with the most kind and condescending care just forewarned them that that very evening they would betray their weakness and their unbelief; they were about to desert him in his last hours; and yet, instead of upbraiding them with their unbelief, he comforts them in their sorrow: "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace."

But, be assured, our blessed Lord did not mean to limit the consideration bestowed in these discourses upon those few disciples that immediately surrounded him there : his mind embraced the wants and sufferings of his people in all ages ; and for us, no less than they, have these divine consolations been recorded, and to us, no less than to them, does he say, “ These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace.”

Let us then, my brethren, notice again (for we have already these truths)—let us again notice that *it is the design of the gospel, of real godliness, to give us peace.* If we have considered it before, yet, as our Lord repeats the statement, it is worthy of repeated notice; it should be impressed strongly on our hearts, and fixed deeply in our judgments: *it is the design of the Gospel to give us peace.* It is the tendency of true religion to rob us of no happiness, but to bestow much that is solid and lasting. If ever the Gospel produces its just results it brings the soul to peace; it gives a holy, a rational, a tranquil, a thoughtful, a sanctifying, and an enduring peace. “ These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace.” It brings a man peace with God, peace with his fellow men, and peace with his own soul. It gives him peace in the remembrance of his past transgressions, in the thought of his present weakness, in the anticipation of future dangers: in looking to all possible changes, his mind will be at peace. “ These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace.”

Yet, at the same time, our blessed Lord assures the disciples here, that they should have *affliction.* This world is meant to be a world of probation, of discipline, of trial, and of improvement. It was not meant that they should be exempt from sorrow: he adds, therefore, here, “ In the world ye shall have tribulation.”

By the word “ world,” I understand our Saviour not merely to mean that they should have afflictions from the oppositions which ungodly men should every where, and through all ages, give to their doctrines and practices, but that, as long as they were in the body, the infirmities of the flesh, the mere circumstances attendant on our infirm condition, would bring them multiplied sorrows: “ In the world ye shall have tribulation.” As long as you are here below, while you are still wrestling with the remainders of sin, while you are yet exposed to those different providential dispensations by which you must be made meet for glory, you shall have much suffering: “ In the world ye shall have tribulation.” Often have the disciples of Jesus Christ, according to his word, suffered much: often do they suffer much now, exposed to an accumulation of physical ills, and suffering under oppression of mind. Sometimes they can say, indeed, “ All thy waves and thy storms have gone over me:” and in such circumstances it is to be expected that even the tried believer, with a strong mind and faith, will sometimes feel his spirit depressed with sorrow. Our blessed Lord and Master in his sorrow said, “ My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.” Even where the good providence of God surrounds his children with all the blessings of providence, there is much in this present world to excite uneasiness and sorrow in every reflecting mind. We may feel pain from our own personal sorrows and sins. Each of the children of God must have his share of sorrow. They may be exposed, according to the arrangements of divine providence, each in his turn, and each in his measure to sickness, and losses, and disappointments, to the opposition of the world, to

many of those cares of life which cross his wishes, and often shorten his days. Such is our natural infirmity, that these things will have at least a momentary effect on the Christian.

Still more, my brethren, our sins are a source of constant uneasiness. Who can strive to walk with God; who can look at what he ought to be, as the portrait of the Christian is drawn in the Word of God, or consider what many of his fellow sinners have been, without finding much to agitate and depress the soul? Many a victory, perhaps, with the assistance of divine grace, he may have won over nature, but by the same sins they are still again and again defiled. To find himself continually liable to transgress against such a God, and such a Redeemer, is enough to distress the Christian's mind. Which of us but finds abundant cause, both for humiliation and sorrow, in the indolence, the pride, the severity of mind towards others, the self-indulgence towards ourselves, in the harshness of judgment and spirit, in the disposition to revenge, in sensuality, in pride, in covetousness, in worldly-mindedness—which of us does not find in these sins that are continually rising up in the soul abundant cause for self-reproach? When we compare what we are with what we ought to be, this must indeed affect our minds. And how much more cause have we for affliction, when we think of the effect which our own infirmities and sins may have upon others. How many wasted opportunities of doing good; and how many are the occasions in which our own sinful defects may have done positive harm, and may have led others to be content with a lower standard of piety, or even perhaps to reject the lessons of godliness altogether.

If our own sorrows, then, and our own sins, may cause affliction of mind, we are not beyond the reach of the sorrows and the sins of *others*. We may be called to suffer in our children, in our friends, in our neighbours, in the world. The amount of sorrow is so great around us, that the Apostle did not hesitate to say, "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth together in pain." And there is nothing but a selfish withdrawal of ourselves from the sight of misery that is in the world; there is nothing but a disposition to shut ourselves up in the circle of our own enjoyments, and to try to persuade ourselves there is no misery beyond that circle, that would hinder us from feeling sorrow of spirit, on seeing how much of sorrow there is every where around us.

Then who can contemplate the sins of others without feeling some degree of pain? The sins of our children, inherited from our own corrupt nature, reproduced in them, perhaps after grace has in a manner conquered them in us, is enough to fill us with deep pain. It is enough to see the infirmities and defects even of our most valued friends, to see how much ungodliness triumphs in the world, to see how little grace reigns even throughout those of mankind that have yet been subdued and penetrated by the Gospel.

Then again, the sorrows and sins of others, as well as our own, are contagious, and have their influence, in various ways, on the happiness of all around us. So that a person surrounded by the blessings of Divine Providence, cannot but find in the present world much that may agitate and depress his spirit, unless he be sustained by divine grace. Our Lord said, therefore, "In the world ye shall have tribulation." This is not meant to be our home: and even the best enjoyments of life are sometimes the positive occasions of, and never can shield us from, those other sorrows which flesh is heir to.

Our blessed Saviour did further intend, that the peace which he bestowed on

his disciples, *should be able to endure through all their sorrows.*" "In the world ye shall have tribulation ; but be of good cheer ; I have overcome the world." It would be of little service to us in this world to have a peace that might exist to any extent without sorrow. But if our Lord has bestowed a peace that can survive and surmount sorrow, that is suited to our condition here below. Now this is the peace which he gives ; he knew that his servants should suffer, but he meant that through all that suffering they should have peace. "But be of good cheer :" in the midst of every thing you are called to bear, still you shall be happy. And how often, probably, has the observation of many Christians here enabled them to perceive the fulfilment of these words. How often have you seen the Christian triumphing amidst accumulated sources of disquietude ? He exercises a lively faith, and while walking with God he experiences such a fulfilment of the promise, "When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee, and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee ; when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee ;" that the fire burns not, the blood overwhelms not : he bears a charmed life ; he enjoys a peace that can sustain all the shocks of adversity, and he is happy in the midst of troubles. So that, while exercising a lively faith, have you not seen a few of the disciples of Christ, who, having fulfilled the apostolical command, "In every thing, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God," have been able to experience the fulfilment of that promise, "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds ;" so that they are able to rejoice in the Lord always, and to say, with the Apostle himself, "Though sorrowful, yet always rejoicing."

But this leads us, in the last place, to consider "*the means by which our blessed Saviour has here declared that peace should be bestowed.*" In the first place, as we have already seen, *this peace is in Christ.* In the next place, we should observe, that *it is in consequence of his victory over the world that his people have peace in him :* "Be of good cheer, *I have overcome the world ;*" and because he has overcome the world, therefore they may have peace in him : In the third place, we should notice, that he bestows peace upon them through the instrumentality of those truths which he has here revealed of himself : "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace."

*Our Lord has overcome the world :* that is, he has not merely obtained, by his atonement and his ascension to glory, the power over all, to check and controul at his pleasure all the opposition of ungodly men to the progress of his Gospel or to his servants individually ; but further, he has obtained the command over all sources of happiness, and the superiority of all the sources of danger : so that he can, at his pleasure, turn sorrow into joy, and mitigate, and controul, and terminate them as he will ; multiplying to the people that wait on him all the sources of enjoyment.

And as he has overcome the world, we may see how his having overcome the world, and how this conquest over the world, may bring us peace, by considering attentively *the various truths which he has here recorded :* "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace." So that when his disciples received these truths respecting him, and weighed them, and suffered them to rest on their hearts, and affectionately to receive them, then finally they have peace with God.

We are brought, then, to recur to some of those principal truths which, in these chapters, our Lord has recorded, respecting his own work and person, by which his disciples may have peace in the midst of sorrow.

Our Lord has, in the first place, here, in order to console his disciples in the midst of sorrow, promised them *another Comforter*. He says, in the sixteenth and seventeenth verses of the fourteenth chapter, “ I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever ; even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him : but ye know him ; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.” Thus the Holy Spirit is sent, therefore, to console the disciples of Christ in sorrow ; he is the Comforter from whom they will never be separated : “ He shall abide with you for ever.” His operation is upon the heart, the imagination, and the judgment ; so that he is able to console : he dwelleth in you, and shall be in you. The work of this blessed Spirit is to guide the disciples of Jesus into a practical and powerful perception of divine truth : “ But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.”

Again, our Lord declares, that this blessed Comforter shall console his disciples by revealing to their minds the principal truths respecting himself: “ He shall glorify me : for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.” And because of all this work of the Holy Spirit upon their hearts, it was better for them to have his presence, than the personal presence of Christ: “ It is expedient for you that I go away ; for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you ; but if I depart I will send him unto you.” That is the first source of consolation intended when our Saviour said, “ These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace.” You observe the first topic of consolation is the gift of the Holy Spirit through his name.

In the second place, our Lord comforted his disciples *by revealing to them his own person and work*. He assures them, in the eleventh verse of the fourteenth chapter, “ Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me : or else believe me for the very work’s sake : ” calling them who had a full belief of his being sent of God, and the Messiah of God, to believe further that he was one with God, and therefore the divine Saviour that was come “ to save to the uttermost.” He assures them, in consequence, that he had existed before he entered into the world, from all eternity, as we gather from another passage, where he says, “ I came forth from the Father and am come into the world.” Consequently he tells them, that all things that the Father hath are his ; and so assures them that he is the way, the truth, and the life, through which they may come to glory, and so is an all-sufficient Saviour in whom they may abundantly trust. This is the second topic of consolation which he addresses to them—that he is an all-sufficient Saviour : and it is the office of the Comforter to reveal that all-sufficient Saviour to the souls of each disciple of Christ.

In the next place, he assures them, that *he would make himself especially known to them, as contradistinguished from any personal presence which they might anticipate and hope for.* “ He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me ; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.” In the context, as we have already seen, he has spoken there of spiritual mani-

festation, or the discovery of his glory to the heart. Again our Lord offers them the consolatory assurance, that when they came and beheld his glory and his work, then they would understand the nature of God, of whom they had hitherto such obscure notions. He says, that after his ascension he would shew them plainly of the Father. This is the third topic of consolation ; that he would give them such a consolation, as through the moral perfections of Jehovah, his own manifest, his own divine glory, might fill their hearts with joy.

The fourth consolation which he promised them consists in his declaration of *love to each one of his disciples*. "He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him." Henceforth it would not be presumptuous in each of his disciples to believe that he was personally the object of the love of Christ and of the love of God.

Again, our Saviour then affords them an immense consolation derived from the assurance that *all their prayers in his name should be accepted*. "Whosoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it." "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." "Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name : ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." What a wonderful source of consolation was opened to his disciples in this assurance, that if, in humble reliance on his merits, they asked in his name for the blessings they were unworthy to receive on their own account, then, however vast the blessing, and however great the exigency, the love and the power of God would bestow the one and supply the other.

Having given them all these gracious assurances, he tells them of a better inheritance hereafter prepared for his disciples. He began these consolatory addresses by saying, "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself ; that where I am, there ye may be also."

Our Lord had therefore spoken these things, which I have thus briefly noticed, in order that his disciples might have peace : and if they are heartily and affectionately received they must bring peace to the soul of the Christian. It was a peace which was promised in the full recognition of all the sorrow to which his disciples were to be exposed : it is a peace therefore which they may each enjoy under all the varied conditions into which the providence of God may bring them. While we have seen in these words that it is the tendency of the Gospel to bring peace to the minds of its disciples, do not many of you, while I speak, recal instances, perhaps many, in which the disciples of Christ, according to your view, have not had peace ? Do you not know those who seem to be Christians to be destitute of this promised peace ? Alas ! my brethren, I fear there are many cases in which the promise seems not to be fulfilled : but you have first to ask, Was it from a morbid state of mind that they lost their peace ? Because those promises were certainly not meant to apply to such a state. Was it from an accumulation of sorrow which for a moment depressed those whom you noticed sinking under this want of peace ? You must recollect that our Lord himself said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death :" and therefore the promise here was not intended to declare that there were no moments in man's earthly career in which he should be free from trouble.

But if those whom you regarded as professed Christians, who were believed

to be so by others, and esteemed so by themselves, were persons of vigorous understanding and firmness of nerve—if you see them disquieted, agitated, fretful, harassed, destitute of peace—still the word of Christ cannot be broken; his promise must stand; it never has yet failed, and it never will. He says, “These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace:” and therefore, if such instances do occur to your minds this evening, let me ask, Did you inquire further into this source of anxiety which manifested a want of peace? Did you ask the reason of those complainings? Our Lord has here promised peace through the influence of the Comforter; but if they did not believe in that gracious influence—if they never sought it, if they were never of the world that could not receive the statement, and so never asked him for his grace; if they never sought that converting grace, and never cherished it; then the reason is manifest why they should not have peace. We can never of ourselves obtain peace; it must be the gift of God; and our Lord has here told us that it must come through the gracious Comforter. Therefore the secret is revealed, and the explanation of all their distress of mind is found, if there be no such dependence on grace as is here implied. If they were expecting from their own good works, their own habits of virtue, to obtain the peace which Jesus Christ has connected with the gifts of the Spirit, then they were offending against him; then they were treating with neglect and indifference his own assurance, and so must look for disquietude of mind. Our Lord has here promised a peace which should be connected with the knowledge of his own glory and his own work. Did they refuse to acknowledge that glory, and did they never heartily receive that way of salvation which he provided? Then it is no wonder that they found not his peace. There is no peace to the unpardoned sinner. A sinner is justified by faith; but they are living without the exercise of faith. Unpardoned and unjustified, how can they expect peace? Our Saviour has himself said, that “on whomsoever this stone shall fall” (and alas! it must fall on all who reject his work), “it will grind him to powder.” Under the influence, therefore, of such a statement as that impending over him, how can he have peace? How can any man have peace who has not, on Scriptural grounds, established his title to eternal happiness through the merit of the Lord Jesus? So long as he has no assurance founded on Scriptural proofs that he belongs to Christ, peace would be out of place; it is far better that he should be agitated and unhappy till he finds in Christ that rest which he would in vain seek for elsewhere.

Our Lord has promised peace through the manifestation of himself to the soul, but then that promise of the manifestation of Christ to the soul is connected with an obedience to him by his disciples. “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.” Peace may come through the knowledge of the love of Christ to our souls: peace may come from that spiritual manifestation of his glory which the gracious Comforter bestows: but this is promised to those who love and obey. Did these persons, then, in whom you observed there was an utter want of Christian peace, disquieted and unhappy, love Christ? Did they prove that love to Christ by obeying him? Were they living in the indulgence of any secret sin? Were they manifesting in their daily walk an inconsistency with the professions of religion? Was there in their habits that which marked

them to be violating their consciences, if they were not proved by those habits not to belong to Christ at all? Were they living in pride, censoriousness, a prevailing love of the world? Did the love of money, which is the root of all evil, obtain the mastery over them? Were they unjust in their dealings, unscrupulous in their words? Were they indulging in revenge, or any of those habits which are tolerated in the world, and are too little censured among Christians? Were they violating their consciences, knowing they were not acting in accordance with the will of God? If they felt this, and their consciences were continually wounded, how then could they have peace? There could be no peace in the wilful violation of the will of God: it was not his intention that there should be. It is far better, that in habitual and conscientious endeavour to discharge the will of God there should be that disquietude of mind in which perhaps they live, and at last, perhaps, are brought to die.

Our Lord has promised here, that there should be peace from the constant employment of those prayers which they may present to the Father in his name. Did you ask them whether they loved prayer? Do they offer their prayers for the return of the sacred day; or were their lives lives of prayer? Did they commence the business in which their whole energies were embarked—did they begin each enterprise by commanding the cause to God? Did they live in prayer? The promise is, “In all things by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God; and the peace of God which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds.” But if they neglected the command how could the promise be valued? Was it to be expected that they should enjoy that peace which comes from communion with God, while they were indifferent to that communion, and positively neglecting it? Did you ask them whether on all occasions they carried their difficulties and sorrows to the throne of grace? Did you ask them whether they sought from God a large supply of the spiritual blessings which his abundant mercy taught them to expect? If not, the secret of this disquietude is apparent. The world has taken such possession of their hearts that reluctance is felt in prayer. They live without prayer, or else in the habit of such formal prayer as can bring no blessing with it; and no wonder they possess not the peace which belongs to Christ’s disciples.

Finally, our Lord has promised a peace which should be connected with exalted anticipations of heaven, when all the troubles and contentions of this world are over. Did they who were unhappy in life and in death, live in the perpetual anticipation of that blessed reward to which the servants of God are invited? The command is, “Set your affections on things above, and not on things on the earth.” Did they obey that command, or did they habitually set their affections on the things of time? Did they seek their best enjoyments from the pleasures or the gains of life? If so, it was impossible but that, in the nature of things, they should be unhappy. If they were successful, then worldly things continue to gain a greater ascendancy over the mind, was continually drawing them further and further from that life which St. Paul says, is “hid with Christ in God.” And if they were not successful, their hearts being set on these earthly things, it was impossible but that, when they lost that which they prized with so much ardour, they should have lost the greatest source of enjoyment, and sink under trouble. Any other result could not be expected. If the heart was set on earthly things, and those earthly things

were by divine providence withdrawn, then they must feel that their happiness is gone, and their spirit must sink in consequence. But the promise of Christ was still true ; and they cut themselves off from its enjoyment by not setting their affections on those things above which Christ had here promised to their faith.

Thus you see, that our Saviour has promised here to his disciples a peace in believing, a peace in dependence, a peace in humility, a peace in heavenly-mindedness, a peace in continual communion with God. And it is that which is assured to his disciples. O, my brethren, if you live in the exercise of those graces, be assured that our gracious Lord will never let you want the peace that belongs to his disciples.

Let me, in conclusion, ask, Do we feel convinced that this peace our Lord is willing to bestow on us ? Do we see its value so as to perceive, that as we have gained any advantage which would be desirable in this world by the loss of this peace, we have suffered an inestimable loss ? Are we convinced that there is nothing better for the child of God, nothing more profitable to him in this present state, than to have precisely that Christian peace which our blessed Lord has here promised ? If so, if this is the deliberate judgment of those whom I address to-night, let me further ask, Are we brought to the fixed resolution to seek it by all possible means ? Are we prepared for every sacrifice and every conflict that is requisite to obtain it ? If so, go at once to the throne of grace that he may give you peace. It is to me a happy consolation, that while addressing so many whom I believe to love the Lord Jesus Christ in spirit, though they may complain of many imperfections that attach to our present profession, you are prepared to estimate the value of that Christian peace ; and perhaps, while meditating on its value, the Lord may bestow a large supply of peace to many of his servants here. O that God may multiply grace and peace amidst the multitude that compose this congregation, that they may never be diverted from it, and never long to have the appearance of grace without its attendant peace ! May the Lord himself, who is the only giver of all good gifts, lead many of his servants here to avoid that unsatisfactory profession of religion, that frequent violation of conscience in little things, that low standard of religion so commonly obtaining even in the church, and desire to know all he meant to bestow on his sincere followers when he said to them " These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace."

## THE COMMISSION OF EZEKIEL.

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REV. T. MORTIMER, B.D.

ST. MARK'S CHURCH, PENTONVILLE, SEPTEMBER 14, 1834.

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"**I** do send thee unto them; and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God. And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear (for they are a rebellious house), yet shall know that there hath been a prophet among them."—**EZEKIEL**, ii. 4, 5.

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THERE are many parts of this wonderful book, the prophecy of Ezekiel, which, even at present, are not fully understood. There are depths in it which the mightiest mind cannot well fathom. Ezekiel was no ordinary, no common writer: he was a man of a bold and daring mind; he was a man peculiarly under the influence of the Spirit of God as a Spirit of holy reproof, boldly rebuking sin, nobly testifying to the truth of God. And many passages in this wonderful book, as they bear upon the Christian minister, are such as no servant of God can read without a holy feeling of awe. For instance, that in which the prophet receives his commission as a watchman, and that in which the blood of souls is laid upon the head of the careless watchman: passages which, as they apply to the ministry of God's holy word in all ages, teach us plainly our duty. God Almighty give us grace to act upon them.

The passage which I have read in your hearing this evening, is one which will furnish, if God be pleased to assist us, with an important subject for our consideration. You have, first, the prophet's commission; secondly, the way in which the message he had to deliver from the Lord would be received—by some received, by others rejected. And then, thirdly, both parties brought to know that the message was from the Lord: to those who received it, it would be accompanied with peace and joy; and those who rejected it find, to their sorrow, at last, that the rejected message came from the God of heaven, and shall surely "know that there hath been a prophet among them." The application of all this to New Testament principles, is that which of course will suggest itself; for, you remember, that "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

Mark, then, the COMMISSION. Look at the terms of the text, and you will see two things particularly deserving your attention:—"I do send;" "thou shalt say: "I do send *thee*;" thou shalt say unto them, "*Thus saith the Lord*." This morning I had to direct your attention to the subject brought before us by the collect of the day, where we pray God to "cleanse, to defend, to pre-

serve his church." If, as priests of the Lord, we have our duty to discharge, let it be remembered, that you, as a people of the Lord, have your duties also to discharge. Look at the commission which we have : " I do send ;" " thou shalt say." And here one naturally pauses for a moment to ask, Is it not an act of infinite condescension, that God should take any notice of us; that the King eternal, immortal, invisible, before whom thrones and angels worship, and do homage and service, at whose footstool they bow, whose praises they celebrate day and night; is it not an act of infinite condescension, I ask, that such a God should send any *message* to man? For what are we, I pray you? Poor finite creatures; of limited capacities, with tendencies to evil, tendencies to the very thing that God Almighty hates, detests, and abhors. Nor only with *tendencies* to these things; but in the actual perpetration of sin; committing crime upon crime. And yet God sends his message to us. Why? Because, my brethren, he knows the original dignity of the soul of man; he knows what it was before he fell; he knows what it was capable of then; and he knows what the soul of man can yet be made through the blood of the cross, and through the power of the Holy Ghost: and, therefore, God sends messages to man. I grant you, no sooner had man sinned than he was driven out of Paradise; but you soon begin to hear some tidings of mercy. In fact, when the serpent is called up for judgment, and the great Lord of all is about to pronounce his mandate, the very curse of the serpent contains a promise of mercy to the poor transgressor, man; it tells, that the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent. Then soon men began to call upon the name of the Lord. You find, after a while, God speaking to the patriarchs promises, some of which (that for instance in Jacob) are still in course of fulfilment. Then the Jewish church is set up in the world, by the express order and direction of God himself. He selected the Jews to be a people, out of all others, to himself, to be especially devoted to his service and glory, to his public worship, and the ordinances of religion. And then you have a succession of prophets, down to the very time of Malachi: then indeed you have a rest—it is a long one—until the harbinger of our Lord appears. The forerunner of Christ comes, and tells the world of the approach of him with whom is the kingdom and the power, and to whom shall be the glory for ever. And from that day to this there has been a church upon the earth, instituted ordinances of religion, one day in seven set apart for the public service and worship of Almighty God. And how many messages of mercy, good people, in God's holy name, have been delivered to you from the Holy Book of inspired truth? How many encouraging promises; how many precious invitations; how much calculated, not only to instruct, but to cheer, to comfort, to edify, and to sustain you, to lead you onward, and to bear you up, in your way to the kingdom of heaven?

" I do send ;" " thou shalt say." We have no business to go and preach unless God send the outward call of the church, and the inward call of the Spirit. And hence our own church asks all its candidates for holy orders—the bishop puts the question—" Dost thou believe that thou art inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon thee this office?" O, solemn question! solemn question! " I do send ;" " thou shalt speak."

But what shall they speak? They shall speak, "*Thus saith the Lord*." The authority for the message is " I do send ;" the nature of the message is

what the Lord hath said. Now you find our blessed Saviour, when commissioning his disciples, does not leave them at liberty to say what they please. No. "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

But let me turn to consider, in the second place, THE WAY IN WHICH THIS MESSAGE, WHICH THE PROPHET HAD BEEN COMMISSIONED TO DELIVER, IS TREATED. A two-fold way: some receive it; others reject it. Concerning the apostolical ministry, concerning the word preached by the apostles, some believed the thing spoken, and some believed not. O, my brethren, this congregation has many divisions. We might divide it, for instance, into those who are rich, and those who are poor; into those who are ignorant, and those who are intelligent. But there is a day coming which will make a narrower division; which will divide you into sinners and saints. When the Son of man cometh, do you know (you ought to know), where you shall be? "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory; and before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats." Some of you who hear the word spoken, receive it; others of you reject it. Let us dwell upon this different treatment which the message from God receives. "Whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear." Let us look at the case of those who hear, and then at the case of those who forbear.

There are some among you, my Christian hearers (thanks be to God!), who do not only hear, but *receive*. The word preached is not preached in vain among you. You hear, that is (as "to hear" signifies), you receive. You receive it as the message from God. There is the point. They greatly mistake who go to hear sermons as they go to hear a tragedy. No, no; when you come to the house of prayer you are coming to another sort of house: it is not a house of sinful amusement, not a house of sinful pleasure, where one mere mortal is aiming to entertain his fellows, to excite their approval, and call forth their plaudits; no; but it is a house where one poor sinner stands up in the name of the ever blessed God, and delivers language for which he that delivers it, and they to whom it is delivered, must give an account at the last terrible and solemn day of judgment. Can you say you have never heard this Gospel? Have we never, in this place, testified repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ? Then woe to us. I do not know a more awful thought than that which stands connected with an unconverted and irreligious clergyman. Of all the miserable men upon earth, that poor wretched man is most to be pitied who delivers the message to others without having received it himself: to be appointed to an office which is to lead others to heaven, and yet not to walk in the way to it himself!

My dear hearers, I do trust, through God's mercy, that there are many here who have not only heard, but received the truth. If so, what effect has it produced? What is one of the first effects where the Word of God is really and truly received as a divine message? Does it generally make people very

happy? I think not; my observation is quite of a contrary character. Where God's Word is received as a message from him, it generally begins by making people first thoughtful, then unhappy: it leads to many a silent tear, to many a secret sob, to many a quarter of an hour of painful anxiety and distress of mind. The feeling is this:—"If the Bible is true, where have I been going? what have I been doing? If I must be converted or perish, what proof have I that I am converted; and if I never am so converted, where shall I go?" This feeling often leads to deep sorrow of heart; and he that never wept over his sins has great reason to fear lest he should perish in his sins. It is a good sign when we sow in tears; for the Scriptures say, blessed is "he that goeth forth weeping, bearing precious seed, he shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." For mark; true religion—the message from God—will begin by making people serious, and then by making them unhappy: but it goes on by taking away their unhappiness. It finds out the disease; it points out all its symptoms, and says, "You are a dead man if you do not go to the good Physician;" but then it takes the sin-sick soul to the good Physician—and what then? (Thanks be to God, my brethren, many of you know what then.) What then? Why, then there is a *peace* to the worldly man unknown.

"O 'tis more than tongue can tell,  
Only to believers known,  
Glorious and unspeakable."

"Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Now this is all the work of the divine message, and which we must deliver to the people at the peril of our own souls. Have you then received this message into your hearts? If so, I give you joy, as well I may, if this is the case.

But look again, *there are others that forbear*. There are preachers that do not declare this message: they may be very amiable, very moral, very kind, very affectionate: if that would take you to heaven we would not attempt to press any thing else upon you; if that would deliver you from sin, and put you in possession of the blessing, the delights, the joy, and the peace, and all the other consequences connected with the Gospel, we would not press that Gospel upon you: but we know it will not. Who then are they that forbear? "Whether you will hear, or whether you will forbear," our duty is the same: we are to go on. O, how these prophets did go on: how they preached, and how they suffered! And, looking into after times, look at the apostles; how they preached, and how they suffered. How boldly did they testify of Jesus; how continually did they appeal to him; how confidently did they declare to the people, that there was no salvation in any other name—that there was "none other name under heaven given among men whereby they could be saved," but the name of Jesus. And how they suffered! How boldly did the martyrs testify; and how they suffered. They were persecuted in every land: but the world soon found that persecution, instead of conquering, was, in fact, promoting the cause of Christianity, so that it passed into a proverb, that "the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the Church."

But are there not among you many who have heard God's holy Word delivered for many years, but who have not received it? That is, for instance, we have told you from God's Word, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise

perish.' You did not believe it; you do not believe it. What is the consequence? You do not repent; you do not pray for grace to repent: you are not deeply concerned; because you are in an impenitent state. But if you believed that you would perish without repentance, why then, unless you were mad, you would instantly begin to pray to God with all the intensity and earnestness possible, to Jesus, who is exalted a Prince and a Saviour, to give you repentance, and with it remission of sins. Then again, we preach to you remission of sins; that you need not bear the guilt of your sins; that God has placed that guilt upon the Lamb which he himself has appointed, the sin-offering which he has accepted: and we say to you perpetually, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." We keep strictly to the characteristic peculiarities of Christianity. Still how many never yet *tried* to behold the Lamb of God: never yet *proved* that their sin might be taken away. Now what is this? Why it is rejecting the message; that is what it is. O some of you, at the last great day—the thought is enough to crush one—will wish you had never heard this Gospel; that you had lived in some poor heathen land, and never had been in a Christian country. You will say then, "I heard these things, but I did not believe them, I did not act upon them; and now it is all over with them."

And this leads us to the last point, namely, that **THEY WHO RECEIVE THIS MESSAGE, AND THEY WHO REJECT IT, SHALL BOTH KNOW AT LAST THAT IT CAME FROM THE LORD.** They who receive it, knew it long before. O, my brethren, those of you who, through God's mercy, and the blood of the Saviour, and through the labours of his servants in this place, have received the truth in love, and are now walking in the way to heaven, you have no more doubt that Christianity is a Divine revelation than you have of your own existence. A person might as well endeavour to persuade you, that the sun never shines by day, nor the moon by night, as to try to persuade you that the Bible is not a direct revelation from God. The indwelling Spirit of the living God testifies with your spirits that these things are true.

But take the case of *those who reject the Gospel.* O, my brethren, they find out also that it was all true. Shall I take the greatest and most terrific instance that can possibly be given of the enemies of God owning the truth of God? It is this—"The devils also believe and tremble." O, my brethren, what a thought is this, that at the last great day, many who have rejected the Gospel will find it to be true. "They shall know that there hath been a prophet among them; they shall know that the good Prophet himself descended from heaven, coming into this our lower world, to teach, and to love, and to suffer, and to die; to deliver instruction, and to set an example, and to make an atoning sacrifice. God save us from all Socinian damnable error, that would merely exhibit Christ as a pattern, and reject him as an atoning sacrifice for sin; that would reject his true and proper divinity and Godhead. O, yes, and if I have a scorner here (but I rejoice to think that some young men who used sadly to disturb our congregation, and caused us much pain, have learned better, and, through grace, we have found it true, that those who came to scoff remained to pray)—if I have a scorner here, let me tell him this:—Well, young man, you may mock at these instructions; but you will find it all to be true bye and by. Now I appeal from the present to the future. You know there is a

story in history of a poor woman who considered herself aggrieved, and applied to Philip, king of Macedon. She found him in a state of intoxication : " I appeal," said she, " from Philip, under the influence of wine, to Philip, sober and able to judge." And so I say to-night (and it is the last thing I wish to say to-night), if the world with its allurements, and the things of time and sense, with their fornications ; if these things enchant and ensnare you now, and intoxicate your spirit, I appeal from that state to the hour when you shall turn your pale face to the wall, when friends, and kindred, and medical men shall whisper, " It will soon be all over :" then you shall find, as true as that there is a God, that the Bible is a divine revelation, that the things which we said to you, concerning which you thought us too much in earnest (great God ! too much in earnest in speaking of thee, and for the souls of men ! O we cannot be too much in earnest) are all perfectly true. O we ought to preach as men that believe the things about which we preach. I appeal, then, in respect to those of you who reject these things, from the present state to the future ; from the present time to the hour of your death, and the morning of the resurrection.

## THE VICARIOUS SACRIFICE OF CHRIST.

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"**T**HREE is one God, and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus;" now observe—" who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." Not that it was not testified in a degree under the Law ; for Jehovah had said by the prophets, that Messiah should be for salvation to the ends of the earth ; a light to lighten the Gentiles, as well as the glory of Israel. But it was more plainly, more extensively testified under the evangelical dispensation. The great sum and substance of the whole is, that Christ died for all—that Christ tasted death for every man—that he is the propitiation, not for the Jews only, but for the sins of the whole world. The substance of the Gospel is this—" God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." These expressions, and others which are found scattered in various parts of the Book of God, appear to clothe the Mediator and his work with a more abundant honour as they evince that he is able to save all mankind, and that there is a worth in his mediation, and in his work, adequate to have met the wants and moral circumstances of the entire population of the globe. I respect all good men ; I value the exhibition of their solid sense, and when that sense flows out in theological discussion : but I must call no man master on earth ; and I cannot help thinking that some very excellent divines, under the idea, and doubtless with the best intentions of honouring the supremacy and sovereignty of God have spoken in language somewhat unwarrantable on the vicarious sacrifice of Christ. They have represented that as equal in value only to the number of those who were to be redeemed, and have stated that Christ never shed one single drop of his blood in vain. Christ's sacrifice was the sacrifice of God as well as of man. " Feed the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood." What a solemn and striking and comprehensive expression is that. It intimates that Christ, when he gave himself a ransom for sinners, displayed a sacrifice of infinite value, able to save the whole mass of mankind if they had received the advantage. This appears to clothe the person and the work of Christ with a dignity and grandeur which in the other case seems merged and almost lost. Christ died for all, for his sacrifice was a ransom that would have redeemed all.—REV. J. CLAYTON.

## THE PERIOD, PURPOSE, AND SIGNS OF CHRIST'S FUTURE ADVENT.

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CHRIST CHAPEL, NORTH BANK, REGENT'S PARK, DECEMBER 6, 1835.

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" And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud, with power and great glory."

LUKE, xxi. 27.

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It is a very interesting and a very important topic upon which our church at this time fastens our consideration. We are bidden to contemplate the advent of the Lord Jesus Christ; we have to speak concerning his second coming to this earth: and we cannot but bring into contrast the former and the latter coming.

He came at *first* clothed with all the infirmities of our nature, and having bound upon himself the burden of all conceivable suffering: he came as a stranger to his own world, and could scarcely find a lodging place there; with no heart to bid him welcome, and none to shew him kindness. He shall come *hereafter* in his glorious majesty; still characterized indeed as "the Son of man," keeping our nature in the closest relationship, and the most intimate brotherhood with his divine nature; coming attended with a glorious retinue having all the splendours of his acknowledged monarchy. He came at *first* as the messenger of mercy, as the missionary of heaven's love to the guilty and the outcast: he came to entreat and to plead with men, that they would not ruin themselves, that they would not outstand their day of mercy and of grace. So tender was his heart, and so deep was his affection for mankind, that he could weep over them when he saw them in all the determination of their obstinacy. But when he cometh *again*, it will be not to plead, but to judge: it will be to administer all the rigid and exact principles of his established dominion. It will be the consummation of his power; it will be his enthronement on that empire unto which the Father hath from everlasting appointed him. It will not be the time when he shall abandon the reins of government, lay down his sceptre, and put away his diadem; but when being subject still unto the supreme will, carrying out all the economies of his administration for the glory of the Eternal one, he will yet keep unto himself the headship of his dominion, and administer it as the Mediator for ever and ever.

Now this is a matter in which his people are closely and intimately concerned. They shall sit down with him on his throne as he is sat down with his Father upon his throne. He will not cast them off from him: he will not sever the bond of connexion that has bound them together; but he will still keep them; he will exercise his kingly and his pastoral office; he will still hold them in the closest and most intimate relationship: and therefore the beginning of his own manifested glory will be the commencement of glory unto them.

It is a matter, then, beloved, not alien from our own condition, not a thing of remote speculation, not a matter upon which we may or may not fasten our contemplation as we will, but it is one of those things which God hath opened in his own word, and which he hath bidden his people to consider for their own comfort's sake. For a long time hath the Church been in her widowed state ; but the heavenly bridegroom shall come, and he shall take her unto himself, and he shall change her robes of mourning for garments of praise. There has been a long seed time of tears ; but there will be a glorious day of harvest : and that day will be the period of the coming of Jesus.

Now in taking this as the subject of our evening's meditation, we desire to present to you these two points : first, the period and the purposes of Christ's future advent ; and secondly, the signs by which it shall be preceded.

Now as to the first division of our subject, **THE PERIOD AND PURPOSES OF CHRIST'S FUTURE ADVENT.** There was a plain prediction that he should come *at the siege of Jerusalem* : but this is not the second advent unto which the expectation of the Church is directed. The coming of the Lord was not then personal : he did not come himself, and in his own proper form, to bring those judgments upon the rebellious city which he himself had foretold unto them. There is some difficulty in the interpretation of the twenty-fourth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew, but we think that this difficulty will in a great degree vanish, if we consider, that the main topic throughout the whole of our Lord's discourse is, his future and final coming—that second advent to judgment on which the thoughts of the whole Church are continually fastened ; and that whatsoever things he said concerning the events to transpire at the conquest of Jerusalem, are only to be received as secondary topics. We are quite sure of this, that the whole prophecy did not receive its accomplishment when the plough-share was driven over the site of the walls of the beloved city. We find in Matt. xxiv. 29, “ Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken : and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven : and then”—that is, after the accomplishment of these things enumerated in the twenty-ninth verse—the approach of the Son of man shall be apparent. But by the parallel passage, namely, Luke, xxi. we find that these very events themselves, which are to usher in the coming of the Son of man, are themselves to be preceded by another event, namely the conversion of the Gentiles. “ They shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations : and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars ; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity ; the sea and the waves roaring ; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth : for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.” Thus you see, the events enumerated in Matthew, xxiv. as preceding the sign of the Son of man in heaven, are themselves to be preceded by another event, not yet come to pass, namely, the conversion of the Gentiles. We are sure therefore that there must have been some ulterior reference in the prediction contained in this former chapter, since

there is something plainly stated in the corresponding passage not yet fulfilled, which is yet declared to be precedent to the accomplishment of these things.

Our Lord came indeed typically at the siege of Jerusalem; but he will come hereafter plainly. All the trial, all the distress, all the sufferings of nature's ties which had been exhibited then more largely than the world ever had witnessed, were but the faint emblems of greater distress and greater perplexity which shall occur by and by.

Neither can it be said properly, that our Lord comes *at the time of death*. In some sort we may use the expression; but we are quite sure of this, that there is another separate, distinct, and personal advent of the Lord Jesus Christ, to which there is very frequent reference indeed in the page of Scripture. When the believer departs, when his course is ended, when the record of his life is all past and exhausted, it may be said that his Master comes to him; that Jesus sends a messenger into his chamber, or that Jesus comes himself for his disciple: but this can be only by way of adaptation, or the use of figurative language. We think it would be an extremely dangerous thing to pare down the plain and precise meaning of the Word of God, and to believe that our Lord's advent should be only that which takes place at the departure of the soul. It is said plainly and specifically that he shall come in like manner as his apostles saw him go; that he shall return from heaven as he went into heaven. Now his departure from earth, and entrance into the sky, was personal; was a thing that they could take notice of with their bodily sight.

Our Lord's coming, then, is not at the siege of Jerusalem, is not at the hour of the believer's death; neither do we think his coming is here spoken of *in the millennium*. There has been, indeed, much dispute upon this head. As you well know, men have differed very greatly in their interpretation of one especial passage in holy writ, and have built up a very ingenious scheme: but they reason, as we think, upon the interpretation of a single portion of the Word of God, and that moreover involved in inexplicable difficulty. If we believe the passage in Revelations, xx. to have reference to the literal resurrection of the buried saints, and the literal inhabitation among them of the Lord Jesus Christ, then we foresee two (though we might enumerate many more) as it seems to us insuperable objections to such interpretation.

In the first place, the risen saints must either come with the bodies which they had on earth, when they were dwellers here—those bodies burdened with pain, worn out with infirmity, and clothed with all the evils that mortality is heir to; or they must come with their spiritualized bodies, with the bodies made fit for dwelling with Jesus in his own kingdom and glory. Then, in the first place, their condition would be infinitely worse, in consequence of their return; or, in the second place, they would come to dwell in a world that was altogether unfit for them. Either they must have bodies which would suffer (and that we cannot conceive) or they must have spiritualized bodies which could not tread on the material and sin-stricken globe which we are now inhabiting.

The next difficulty is equally formidable. The same chapter which tells us concerning the resurrection of the saints, and their reigning with Jesus a thousand years, tells us also concerning a subsequent apostacy; tells us concerning Satan being loosed for a time; concerning Gog and Magog compassing the city of the saints: and although we are told that they are destroyed by

fire from heaven, yet there is an interval during which the peace and tranquillity of the reign of Jesus is to be interrupted. Now we confess we cannot perceive how this shall be at all consistent with the establishment of Christ's kingdom on earth, and the raising of his people from their graves to reign in that palpable and apparent dominion.

There have been a great many vain and foolish opinions advanced upon this head: we do not mean to say that *all* have been vain and foolish. We know that persons have taken such views as these, encompassed and environed with difficulties though they may be—persons whose judgments deserve all respect, and whose characters can be hardly rated too high. But yet we believe, that the interpretation which is the safest and the soundest, the most consistent with the whole truth of Scripture, is, that this passage (occurring, be it remembered, in the midst of a book of figures and symbols) is to be interpreted figuratively and symbolically.

If then the Lord Jesus Christ comes, neither at the siege of Jerusalem, nor in the hour of death, nor in the millennial period, it remains that his second advent be thrown to another period, namely, *the winding up of all this world's concerns*; that period to which we are advancing as centuries roll on, and as the world grows old; that period when the everlasting designs of God concerning this lower creation shall be accomplished, and he will send forth his dear Son, unto whom he hath committed the kingdom and the power, then to appear and to assert his authority.

Now we think the *purposes of his coming* are two-fold. He shall come *judicially*: he shall come to preside in the great assize, when the buried millions of our race shall be called up from their hiding-places—when they who have slept in the earth while ages rolled on, and they whose green graves have only just been covered in—will stand together before the judgment-seat; He unto whom the Father hath committed this final administration of justice will take account of them; and the witnesses shall appear—the advantages they have had, the opportunities they enjoyed, and the means of mercy wherewith they were privileged; they shall all bear testimony for them or against them; and there shall be the adaptation of an accurate and precise measure to all who shall appear: there shall be the administration of perfect equity; for the Judge of all the earth shall do right. It shall be a time of confusion to the enemies of Jesus, and a time when his own people shall rejoice; for in the face of the Judge they will behold the features of kindness which have ever looked upon them.

But he will come (and to this we would especially call your attention) as *the great restorer*. Now we believe that a great deal of mistake and misapprehension has obtained with respect to this purpose for which the Lord Jesus Christ will finally be revealed. We have concluded, too hastily, that this world, with all its fitting up, and all that it containeth, shall be annihilated by the action of fire. We know indeed that it was the word of prophecy concerning Christ, that he should baptize in a two-fold way—that he should baptize with *the Holy Ghost* (and we think that this prophecy was fulfilled at the day of Pentecost, an I hath been in a perpetual course of accomplishment ever since); and secondly, that he should baptize with *fire*; and we believe that this shall be accomplished on the day of his second advent. Now in order to understand what sh ll be the effect of this baptism of fire, we are referred to a passage in

the second epistle of Peter, and there we find that a parallel is drawn between the water deluge and this final baptism of the world by fire. It is said, that as the world was destroyed by water, just in the same sense the world will be destroyed by fire : that is to say, it was so destroyed that its outward aspect was altogether changed, but not so destroyed as that its identity was removed. So at the last, the fire shall go forth, and the flaming flood be brought into operation on this our globe ; but it shall not consume, it shall not annihilate, it shall not blot out the world from the catalogue of existence ; but it will change it, and cause it to come forth bright and fair, and fit for the habitation of the blessed.

Now we have taken into our imagination a strong aversion from any notion of materialism in our heaven ; and have persuaded ourselves that the place of the blessed must necessarily be a cold, vague, distinct, abstraction—separated from all the localities and sympathies with which we have had alliance and brotherhood. But truly we can find no Scriptural warrant for such a notion. The material world that we tread upon, overhung by its ethereal sky, was not too base or too vile to be the dwelling-place of God's blessed, and holy, and happy creatures. It was the world that God looked upon in all its green freshness, and pronounced concerning it that it was very good. We think, then, that the Lord, purifying it by fire, shall cause that it be again a fit dwelling-place for his own people ; a fit dwelling-place for those in whose hearts there shall be only loving and gracious feelings, and on whose lips there shall be nothing but songs of praise.

There is an exact parallel in this respect between the body we bear about and the world we inhabit. The body goes down to the grave, and corruption is set at work : it is unclothed of its flesh, and it falls into all the naked anatomy of the skeleton form : it passes through the loathsome process of decomposition, and is resolved into its original elements ; and the worm and the creeping thing do feed on it. But we do not believe it is thus left for ever and ever a prey to rottenness and the grave. We do not think that it shall for ever lie in the charnel-house, disgraced and defiled, and the trophy of Satan. We believe it shall be restored, that it shall be raised incorruptible and immortal. And even so concerning our globe : it shall not always be like what it now is, the prison-house of the soul, and the home of the exile : for then it were a memorial of Satan's triumph ; then what were it but the acknowledgment that the principle of evil had conquered, that Satan had wrought his will, and that Jesus had not accomplished his design. Truly we believe that the world on which we dwell shall be restored and brought back into the galaxy of Jehovah's favour : we believe that truly it shall become a world wherein righteousness shall have her habitation ; whereon the godly may walk ; a world on which God shall look again with infinite and unbroken complacency, and the inhabitants of which shall enjoy full and perfect blessedness.

Having spoken concerning the period and the purpose of our Lord's second advent, we would go forward to say something concerning THE SIGNS BY WHICH IT SHALL BE PRECEDED.

There would surely be no excuse at all for us, if we were to attempt with a nice, curious, and prying imagination to look into those secret things that are hidden from us, and to shake out the fancies of our own minds, and dignify them

with the name of discoveries : but we would just desire simply to follow out the records of God's word, and thankfully receive all the information which it communicates to us.

The Apostle wrote a letter to the people of Thessalonica, and they misinterpreted his letter, coming to the wrong conclusion that the day of the Lord was at hand: and the purpose of the Apostle's second letter was to remove this mistake ; not to tell them that they were in error concerning the *fact* of the second advent, but that they were in error in this respect—that, in the urgency of their desire and expectation, they had overlooked all the intervening events : and upon the consideration of these events the Apostle thus fixes the mind of his people. Now from this passage of holy writ, and from other passages of the Bible, we collect information concerning those signs by which the coming of the Lord Jesus is to be proclaimed.

In the first place we believe there shall be *the conversion of the Jews*. Nothing can be more plainly stated in Scripture than God's ultimate design of mercy towards them. Through a long season they have been outcasts from his favour, they have been wanderers in the world ; the finger of unbelieving scorn has been pointed at them ; they have been the off-scouring of all things, and the reproach of the world. But the time will come when the Lord shall have pity upon his ancient people. In the tender and beautiful language of the prophet, “ As one whom her mother comforteth, so will I comfort you, and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem.” And again : “ I will pour out upon the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and supplications : and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced.” “ I will make Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy.” There shall be the accomplishment of all the bright and the blessed predictions, which her seers in their several generations poured forth for the consolation of the outcast people : “ Violence shall no more be heard in thy streets, wasting nor desolation within thy borders : but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise. The sun shall be no more thy light by day ; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee ; but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down : neither shall thy moon withdraw itself ; for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended.” Not indeed that we believe there is to be found any Scriptural warrant for the opinion of the distinctness hereafter of the Jewish nation ; we believe exactly the reverse shall be the case. The Apostle has told us in the Romans, that they shall be graft as branches into the olive tree. But the Gentiles have been grafted into the olive tree. We have higher testimony, even that of Jesus himself ; and he hath told us, “ There shall be one fold under one shepherd.”

But it will be said on the other hand, that there are Scriptures which speak to us plainly and precisely, concerning the rebuilding of the temple, and the restoration of the people to the land of Canaan. Now we can hardly conceive for what purpose this literal building shall be. We can hardly conceive why the land of Canaan, not distinguished by natural advantages, and being too small for the occupation of the people, should be chosen for this purpose. But, nevertheless, if we found it according to the testimony of Scripture, though it were a difficult thing, we would not hesitate to receive it. But we believe these predictions have a two-fold fulfilment, a literal and a figurative one

We believe the literal fulfilment took place when the people came back from the land of their captivity, when the exile returned and dwelt in the land of his fathers, and a temple was reared for the ancient worship. We believe that the spiritual fulfilment shall take place, when they come indeed to worship the true Lord of the temple, and dwell in the land of spiritual promise.

Besides the conversion of the Jews, there will be *a very glorious extension of the Gospel kingdom*. The nation shall be converted; the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. The missionaries and ministers of the Lord Jesus Christ shall go forth with unwonted energy, and their labours shall be attended with unparalleled success. We do not question that there shall be a very large extension of the principles of true religion. We do not at all question that there shall be a greater outpouring of the Spirit in the latter day than the world hath yet seen; so that from Labrador to Hindostan the name of Jesus Christ shall be known: so that, it may be, the candlestick shall be replaced in the churches of Asia Minor; many an island where the name of the true God was never heard shall receive the ancient faith; the altars shall be thrown down, the temples of the idols shall be overturned, and the people shall return from their dark and cruel superstitions: they shall know the Lord, and serve him. We do not think, however, that this conversion of the pagan world shall be universal. We believe the sign of the Lord's coming shall be that which he tells us, "The word shall be preached for a witness to all nations:" not for the conversion of all the inhabitants of the world, but for a witness to those among whom it shall be.

Besides this there shall be *the convulsions of states*: there shall be a political stir; the lightning shall issue from one end of the earth to the other; there shall be perplexity of nations, and men's hearts failing them for fear. This may be: and we know not but that this sign is already in its commencement—when the frame-work of social life and political relationship seems to be disjointed and out of place; when it seems as if society was about to be resolved into its first elements; when so many schemes for the world's regeneration are put forth, some by the malignant who desire to do harm, and some by the benevolent who dream of doing good. I think we can almost see the approach of this sign.

But there shall come another, and, probably, the most marked of all: we mean the revelation and the final subjugation of the principle of Antichrist; a principle, perhaps, rather than a person; although upon this question we do not desire at large to enter. We, however, altogether repudiate the opinion, that Antichrist is one single individual; for the Apostle has told us in the plainest terms, that there are many Antichrists: and we think it exceedingly probable, that in succession one and another development of evil shall take place, that ungodliness will come out of its lurking-places, and pollute our streets, defile our dwelling-places, and corrupt our families; so that society shall become more debased than it ever yet has been: that in the same day there shall be the triumph of infidelity; it shall no longer skulk in its dark places, but shall walk abroad boldly, and shall become a proselytizing principle.

And we believe that in the enumeration of antichristian principles, we are not to overlook the principle of Popery. Now we have no sympathy with those who raise an outcry against Popery than on any other than a religious ground

we have no sympathy with those who make this outcry a shelter for political animosity. But still we hate Popery; and we would set ourselves with all fixedness of opposition to do what we can for its overthrow: just for this cause, that we believe in all sincerity, that it is the precursor of infidelity; that its tendency is to eat out the core of all belief; that wherever it spreads, whether in Italy, Spain, or Ireland, its consequences have been the same, to make those among whom it had obtained dominion to be altogether infidels. And we believe the extension of Popery will be just preparing the way for the last antichristian principle, namely, infidelity.

There shall be these signs in the world. And will the world be observant of them? We little expect it: we believe that, in spite of all these warnings and these plain footmarks of the coming time, that the world will be found locked in the lap of insensibility and slumber. As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be in the days of the Son of man: there will be the like of warning then. When Noah began to build the ark it was a warning to the people who beheld him: every plank of the vessel which he laid, preached a homily to those who heard him; and all his workmen where his hearers. But they were insensible as the wood which they shaped and the iron which they handled. We do not question that it was just with them as with our own people: they were insensible, they were regardless. The man of philosophy would take a great deal of pains to demonstrate, how it was utterly impossible that a deluge should take place; and they would plainly insist on principles, which, however, were not sufficiently established, that the windows of heaven could not be opened, nor the foundations of the great deep broken up; that they were safe enough, and that in spite of all the preparations around them, they were in perfect security. And the man of wit would doubtless find a very pertinent subject in all the efforts that were made by the patriarch, in all his pains-taking and laborious preaching to them. And the poets of that time, perhaps, like the little poets of our own day, might help themselves out with infidelity, when they found that their imaginations flagged. But in spite of all this—in spite of their philosophy, their wit, and their poetry—the flood came and overwhelmed them all. Even so shall the coming of the Son of man be. In spite of the innumerable warnings; in spite of all the messages which God is sending concerning his design; in spite of the volume which he opens for our consideration; men will be heedless, and the destruction of that time shall find many of them sleeping. Infidelity, doubtless, will be at work even to the end; and using, perhaps, the very same arguments which it applied in the apostles' days. And the scoffers will draw an argument from the sameness of nature's operations, and the unchangeable aspect of all earthly things; and they will say "Where is the sign of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were, from the beginning of the creation." They will be in their places of business; the markets and exchanges will be crowded; men's minds will be engrossed and occupied with carnal and secular objects: pleasure will sometimes dislodge business; the bride will be brought home to her husband's house; parents will have their hearts gladdened with the sight of the new-born heir; and families and intimates will be gathered together in their days of jollity and merriment. But in the midst of all this shall burst the trump of the archangel, and the crash of the world; and men, in the midst of their engrossing cares, shall be surprised, in the pursuit of all their business-like

occupations, and all those trifles which they call fashion, and make the business of their lives.

Churlish as some of the professors of the Gospel are towards the brethren of Christ, *they* will be surprised by the coming of Him who hath called them brethren; and their reproach will be, that they looked with a disdainful eye upon those whom they called in mockery their brothers and their sisters: and Christ will overwhelm them with reproaches, in the midst of their vain and empty professions. And this shall be their condemnation, that Jesus poured out his life's blood for them, and that they gave nothing to the starving families of those who were partners and co-heirs with them; that, though Christ had given them the robe of his own righteousness to enwrap their souls, and had builded for them glorious palaces in heaven, they provided no raiment nor shelter for the children of sorrow, whose houses were unroofed, and on whom the winter's storm was spending all its violence. But Jesus has come, and surprised the false professor, and those who have no mercy on themselves nor others, and who have buried the treasure of eternal hope beneath the vileness of this earth's corruption.

Beloved, we entreat you, for your own sake, and for God's sake, that you lay this matter to heart. In what posture would you be found? Would you be wakeful and watchful, or slumbering and unwary? We do not doubt what your answer would be. O, we say to you then, feed your lamps with the oil of grace; keep your loins girded; be ever on your watch-tower, looking abroad for the sign of the coming of the Lord. Whether it shall be sooner or whether it shall be later, you cannot tell. This we are sure of: it will be soon in relation to the past, and it will be soon in relation to the eternity that is before us. He may come to us when we are young or when we are old. We may be called away years before the leaf is withered, or we may stay on earth till every bough is leafless, and there is only left the solitary scathed trunk. We may have slept in our graves for centuries before Jesus comes; or it may be that his footsteps are at the threshold of our world, and that he will soon knock at the graves, and call out the inhabitants, and cause that the bone and the sinew and the flesh should be again instinct with life, and that man in his complex nature should come forth to meet him. Many of you must have felt that this world cannot suffice you. The immortal mind is now pent up and caged in a perishing body. This cannot be its home; this cannot be its last destiny. All the while we are here, we are in the precincts of corruption. All our life-time we are spending in the antechamber of death: all the objects around us are eloquent of decay; and preach sermons to us, our funeral sermons, perpetually. Wearied and worn out, as some of us are, with jaded faculties and exhausted hopes, having our path paved with sorrow, we would not that this should be the last of our history. But in the midst of all our darkness, in the midst of all our clinging cares and sorrows, the day-light of truth breaks in on our souls, and we have glimpses of a brighter and a better world. O that is the world where Jesus dwells! May God give us that our hope may be more fixed on it, that our eye may never turn aside from it! And then we are willing that Christ should come in our life-time; we are willing to go down to our quiet graves and stay his coming: for we know that whosoever his advent shall be, we, being his people, having his love in our hearts, shall lift up our eyes, because our redemption draweth nigh.

## CHRIST THE HEALER OF DISEASES.

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REV. M. O'SULLIVAN, A.M.

ST. LUKE'S CHURCH, CHELSEA, JULY 26, 1835 \*.

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"And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them."—MATTHEW, iv. 24.

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It is well worthy of reflection that our Lord Jesus Christ, whose coming into the world and whose departure from it, were calculated so eminently to set forth the insignificance of every thing earthly, did, nevertheless, apply himself to alleviate the evils incident to man here, with as tender and as vigilant an anxiety, and as prompt a readiness to relieve, as could be entertained by one who counted this life and its concerns objects of great and intrinsic importance. Christ came into this world, not with a view of making men happy here, nor with a promise that worldly good should be the inheritance of his followers, on the contrary, he directs that they be ready to renounce all they hold dear: he warns them that if they would be faithful followers of him, they must be prepared for such renunciation. He teaches them that no happiness is to be coveted except that which springs up within the heart that is no longer conformed to this world; except that which is vouchsafed as the consolation of those who do sincerely mourn. And yet, while he taught his disciples these great and searching truths, he went about doing good; doing that which even the natural man would call good; doing good of that kind which the superficial could not but be altogether ready to acknowledge as being conducive to the great objects which men should have at heart.

There is something exceedingly interesting in this thought: that our blessed Lord, whose coming here, and whose going hence, were calculated to set forth this truth in its insignificancy, did, nevertheless, consult even for the happiness of human beings here. He comes into a world which is in undisguised enmity towards him, and yet, every step he takes, his words and works breathe out, not alone holiness, but also mercy and love. He comes into a world where every ill that visits itself upon man, is no more than a natural consequence of man's transgression; where it might be said the unhappiness that man is born to is the shadow of that sin by which man offended against God. And in this world the Lord Jesus Christ is to be seen at the bed-side of the sinner, who has brought his infirmity upon himself, not to aggravate the sins of the man,

\* For the Chelsea, Brompton, and Belgrave Dispensary.

not to sink that sinner beyond all comparison into despair ; but for the purpose of interposing between the consequences of sin and the victim they would destroy, and giving him courage, and hope, and confidence, to soften the scenes of his affliction and his contrition.

This was not the species of miracle which the hard hearted would have expected from our Lord. The Pharisees would dictate to him the manner in which he should overcome their incredulity. If he would show signs in the heavens—if he would lift himself above the great ones of the earth—if he would come down from the cross, and leave the redemption of mankind unaccomplished—they would account him worthy of their homage, because they would esteem him formed after the fashion of their own hearts. But because his miracles were mercies—because his precepts were gracious words—because he would not indulge them in the performance of miracles which a hard heart, a cold imagination, an ungodly nature was most desirous to see for its own indulgence ; because his signs were wrought upon the earth—not exhibited upon the remote expanse of heaven, and had for its object, not so much to amaze man's mind as to convert his heart ; they would not acknowledge him the God of glory and the God of love ; and they uttered blasphemous expressions against him because he came to save sinners.

A day will come when that species of miracle which the contemners of our Lord's simplicity desired shall be wrought before all assembled existences. At that time, when he cometh in his glory, when he shall have put on his robe of splendour, when all the heavens and the earth shall flee away because of him ; when the throne is set which, when the wicked have once stood before, shall never appear again ; in that day there shall be signs and wonders of all the majesty and might that the imaginations of these men's hearts vainly strived to aspire to : *then* when Christ sitteth to reject for ever those who have rejected him and his law while life was granted to them—to welcome into his Father's kingdom those who took up their cross and followed him in his humility here upon the earth. But such signs and wonders would not have been suited to that time when Christ came to save the world. Then it was not his object to collect around him the proud and the hard-hearted : then were his miracles to be those of which rather the faith of man should discern the excellence than the senses of man rejoice in : then, instead of setting forth his glory as the carnal heart of man may delight to see glory set forth, it was the object of our Lord to perform such actions amongst them with whom he sojourned—to leave such a history recorded for those who will read that history now—that the thought of the benign and blessed Jesus might become associated with every thing that was dear, as well as every thing that was sorrowful to man, ennobling him in all that was joyful, and diffusing over his affliction a serene and a purifying consolation.

See the Lord Jesus Christ surrounded, as his Gospel sets him forth, with those whom he has delivered from their infirmities. You see him as he pursues his track of mercy upon earth ; and you find it constantly, that the Lord is to be recognized, not in the glory that surrounded him, but in the virtue that goes out of him. It is not that he assumes to himself what the eye of man would delight to dwell on as great and magnificent ; but that he makes every heart to desire to feel the benefit of his presence, and to be made sensible of his mercies : and instead of taking his place upon the throne to which the

people would elevate him; he took it most especially at the bed of sickness, in the chamber of sorrow; and diffused there the balm of his consoling presence.

In every instance where our Lord is set forth, he is presented to us as a God of mercy; and you find that whilst his mercy is over all from the beginning of his course, yet more especially does he shed its consolations on those whom sickness has overtaken. Therefore the healing of diseases, which is set forth as one of our Lord's characteristics, is so marked out, because it was to be descriptive of the religion he taught, and directive of the precepts he gave: and, therefore, it is incumbent upon all who love him and his religion, and who do honour to his name, to act in the spirit of which he has left them the example, and to be instrumental in healing diseases, and in making men feel the excellency of the Christian dispensation in this especial character.

The example in the Gospel of our Lord's promptitude to heal diseases, causes us to remember, if at any time we lose the sense of such remembrance, that it is not in a season of sickness reconciliation is best effected between man and God. We all know the value of sickness in taming down the proud spirit, and in giving a direction to human thought: but all who know what sickness is, know likewise that it is after restoration to health that the thoughts and the instructions with which the hours of illness are enriched yield their full benefit; and those who have not the experience by which they could gather this truth for themselves, may, from the constant practice of our Lord, ascertain that it is true. If sickness were the time when it was most fitting that man should commune with his own heart, and be edified, and turn towards God, could it have been the essential characteristic of our Lord's mission that he healed all diseases? If man during the hours of sickness was, of necessity, becoming more acquainted with his own weakness, with his own frailty, and, at the same time, becoming more constantly turning towards the source of good, towards the cure of spiritual infirmity; is it not to be supposed that the miracles by which our Lord authenticated his mission would have been of a different character, and that, instead of giving the proofs he did in the healing of diseases suddenly by a word, by a touch, by the shadow of his presence, by contact with the hem of his garments, is it not natural to suppose that he would have given time for men to recover from their illness, that he would have delivered them gradually from disease, that he would have left them to the solitary companionship of sickness, by which they would be instructed in things pertaining to their peace, and brought unto God? But since the Lord Jesus has directed the mercy and the miracle towards one great object, and since that object is principally the cure of diseases, it does appear that he conveys a solemn lesson that it is not in the hour of sickness we should seek to make our peace with God; that he gives that lesson to all who are now in strength that they may understand it. For what is the Lord Jesus? What is his name? Why is it he is called Jesus? Not that he would save men from sickness, from temporal affliction: it is because he saveth from sin. And since that is his name, and since he avowed the manifestation of that name by, in the same moment, pardoning sin and healing infirmity; and since he left it as the marked peculiarity of his mercy that it was extended to those who were sick; he does give us the lesson (God grant that all may take it!) that it is in the hour of health that we should seek to obtain God's pardon, and not postpone it till that melancholy period out of

which Christ delivered those to whom he also extended the benefit of his forgiveness. May God grant that you shall never know it—that you shall not by experience be brought to know the anguish and the tribulation of a troubled spirit, in which the sick man strives to make himself acquainted with the thoughts concerning his immortal interest—the agony with which he strives to apprehend them, in an hour when the sinking spirit, the tormented frame, and the confusion of thought renders it impossible correctly to understand. But warned by the instruction which our blessed Saviour gives, may you, whilst you are spared, in the hour of strength, apply yourselves to obtain those thoughts which you shall find dear and familiar to you, and yielding precious consolation, upon a sick bed.

Again, I would say to you, if you have been acquainted with sickness, and have been recovered, the example of our blessed Lord teaches you where you ought to return thanksgiving. I cannot but regret that the instances are so few in which congregations are edified by the public returning of thanks. I cannot satisfy myself that we are to account religion in a prosperous state until we shall find more frequently public acknowledgments of God's mercy for restoration to health. It would be useful to the congregation as it would to individuals, if those raised up would come and return thanks for the Lord's deliverance ; as you should, when you read the Gospel of our Lord, remember that it was for ourselves especially that all these miracles of mercy were wrought, in order that we might never be for a moment at a loss to understand that, when we are raised to newness of life, our gratitude is due to Him who made it his special characteristic so to raise men.

Those who would believe in this attribute of our blessed Saviour, and those who are grateful from a sense of his mercies, either in protecting from disease, or in raising them up from its effects, will not be slow to extend their acknowledgment in the form of grateful offerings to multitudes, who are dependent upon such offerings for protection from disease.

Now is it not very marvellous that ancient Rome, in all its greatness, in all its wisdom, in all its splendour, in all its wealth, has not recorded on history the boast that there was within its extended circumference one asylum for the recovery of the sick ? And how can this be explained ? We have the remains of their triumphal arches ; we have the monuments of their glory in war ; we have the proof in the works they achieved, by wealth, and art, and boundless labour, that man's ingenuity and man's perseverance could triumph over natural obstacles, and, we may almost say, conquer in : and yet there does not remain one proof, that amidst all this glory, all this wealth, all this luxury—luxury, remember, which proves that there must have been extremities of condition—luxury which testifies to us, what the wants of the poor must have been, as well as what must have been the dangers of the rich ; yet, with all this, there is not handed down to us that that immense city, the mistress of the world, had within her walls one hospital. And how was this ? How is this to be explained ? Was Rome unacquainted with the wisdom which should teach them that these things were necessary ? Was Rome unacquainted with those periodical outbreaks of the population which might have taught her that the poor should be cared for ? Was she indifferent to the necessity of having infection kept from her palaces ? Was she insensible to the important benefits that would arise from having physicians rightly trained to minister to her

senators in their sickness and their disease? Assuredly not. How then can be explained the singular circumstance that she had no hospitals, unless we admit the truth that sordidness is blind, and that although selfish principles may actuate men to sustain institutions of which they have already reaped the benefit which they desire to be continued; yet will no feelings, except those that are in their nature charitable and disinterested, serve to set forth an institution such as is not immediately profitable to those originating it; and none but charitable and religious feelings will be available to their continuance.

I commit the institution, for which your support is requested, to the feelings of your heart, in the full confidence that you will not abandon your duty. If you are grateful to God for his benefits to yourselves—if you regard the poor as you must—if you delight to honour Christ's name, and to give a testimony to his religion that it imparts peace—you will not, in a place where all your hearts are open before him, and where he is in the midst of you—you will not say that you believe him the Lord of life, and the Lord that healeth diseases, and go out of this place giving proof that you are totally indifferent to the privilege you possess.

## THE GRADUAL CORRUPTION OF CHRISTIANITY.

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“ No enormous evils connected with what is really good, ever reach their completion and maturity at once. The progress of corruption in the case before us was gradual. It began early. The principles were working even in the days of the Apostles. But there were for a considerable time hindrances to their full development. While the Church was in a state of opposition and suffering, it preserved no little purity and *true* lustre. But when the Roman government ceased to be Pagan, and Christianity was established by Constantine, it was soon secularized too ; so that to become a Christian was no longer the way to become a martyr, but the high road to bask in the sunshine of royal favour, and to gain the honours, and riches, and places, and preferments that come from man only. Thus passages were opened and allurements spread for the entrance of every improper and unprincipled pretender. Conversion was no more a proof of sincerity, but might equally well shew only an appetite for loaves and fishes.

“ To what a state of degeneracy religion was reduced in the course of a few centuries, we have sufficient testimonies from Popish writers themselves ; though many attempts have been made since these confessions were delivered, to suppress, or deny, or qualify them.

“ It matters little where we begin, or in what order we proceed, provided our statements be true ; and never was there a subject in which there could be so little need of exaggeration.

“ By a concurrence of favourable circumstances, a priest called the Pope obtained in himself the union of both spiritual and temporal power. His sovereignty was absolute ; and he determined that to him every knee should bow and every tongue confess. Numberless offices and dignities lay at his disposal. He had his palace, his court, his council, his ministers. His ambassadors intrigued ; his bullies threatened ; his soldiers slew ; and his locusts devoured. Cabinets were cajoled by his agents ; and kings held their dominion as his dependents, and paid him the most slavish homage. If any disobeyed him, he interdicted all the usual worship in their realms, and absolved their subjects from all allegiance to their authority. The most abject bondage, or the most fearful anarchy, hung upon his smile or frown. To all the wickedness, was annexed the title of Holiness ; to all the falsehood, the claim of infallibility. The ministers of the sanctuary, instead of being the servants of the meek and lowly Jesus, who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many, lorded it over God’s heritage, were tyrannical and rapacious, indolent and self-indulgent ; so that Isaiah would have said, ‘ His watchmen are blind : they are all ignorant, they are dumb dogs, they cannot bark ; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand, they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter. Come

ye, say they, I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink ; and to-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant.' ' Like people, like priest.' Nothing could have exceeded the ignorance and depravity of the common ranks, who in blind submission yielded up, bound hand and foot, their understandings and their consciences to those that had the rule over them, and did not watch for their souls. Almost every thing, Jewish and Pagan, was blended with ' the simplicity there is in Christ.' Instead of ' a pure offering in righteousness,' and a spiritual service, there were introduced an endless number of saints' days, and a round of unmeaning, unprofitable, superstitious usages, unsanctioned by the first and purer ages of the Church, as well as at variance with the word of life. They forbade to marry, and commanded to abstain from meats which God has created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believed and knew the truth. ' Touch not,' said they, ' taste not ; handle not ; which all are to perish with the using ; after the commandments and doctrines of men. Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body ; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.'

" But the time would fail me to tell—of transubstantiation, or converting the bread and wine in the Lord's supper into his very body and blood ; of the adoration of images and reliques ; of the mediation of saints ; of prayers to departed spirits ; of pilgrimages ; penances ; compositions for guilt ; sales of indulgences ; prices set on every species of sin ; morals poisoned at the fountain-head ; persecution justified and extolled ; heretics, *i. e.* all who receive not the mark of the beast, fined, imprisoned, banished, put to death : and all this to do God service ! Justification by faith, a doctrine ' by which a church stands or falls,' was exploded. Works were meritorious of salvation ; yea, they could produce a superflux of merit remaining after the performers had been indemnified and rewarded, to constitute, with the merit of Christ, a general fund from which portions might be taken and applied to the prevention or shortening of the pains of purgatory. The service was in an unknown tongue. The Scriptures were withholden from the laity. Yet there was no salvation out of this church ! And all was confirmed by lying wonders ! Darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people. And could you have witnessed the whole instead of hearing a thousandth part of it this morning, how would you have sighed, ' O that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion ! When God bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad.' "—**JAY'S TERCENTENARY SERMON.**

## THE ADVENT OF CHRIST.

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REV. F. ELLABY, A.M.

PERCY CHAPEL, CHARLOTTE STREET, FITZROY SQUARE, LEC. 6, 1833.

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"He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come."—LUKE, xix. 12, 13.

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My brethren, I have often asked two things of you; the lifting up of your hearts unto God in prayer, and the fixing of your eyes upon his Word, that you may receive of the Spirit, and by the Word, instruction, and grace, and blessing. I press for such prayer and such attention, on the present occasion, more earnestly, because, in conformity with the requirement of the church, I have chosen my subject, and in accordance with the Collect and Epistle of this day, I am about to refer you to various passages of Scripture, for the right understanding and reception of the doctrines of which, any power less than divine, and any attention less than an undivided attention, will be of no avail.

Give yourselves then, I beseech you, unto prayer, and have your Bibles ready and open, and give your undivided attention to instruction from the Word of God, touching the coming and kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, of which He himself so pointedly speaks by the text.

Anxious to commend the truth on this, as on all other subjects, to every one's conscience as in the sight of God, I offer an observation or two before I come to my special design. And first, let it be remembered, that our Lord Jesus Christ revealed himself, by his angel, to his servant John in Patmos, as the Alpha and Omega, the Lord who was, and is, and is to come, THE ALMIGHTY. And let it also be borne in mind, "that no prophecy of the Scriptures is of any private interpretation;" for it served the men of God, by whom it came of the Holy Ghost, and also their generation and age; and it serves us for present uses and application as it served our fathers, and will serve our children all through this age; and will be needed for the age to come, which, witnessing the Lord's glory, will witness the world's prophetic fulfilments until all shall be accomplished: so that there is a resemblance between the Lord and his Word, or between the living Word and the written Word; for both are immutable, and of both it may be said, "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."

For this reason, although I have a special object in view, I wish to commend to you the whole Word, and every doctrine it contains; and lest any of you should imagine that I have no other food for my own spiritual or mental enjoyment, than that which duty, as well as inclination, constraineth me to

minister unto you, at this season, I declare the contrary to be the truth. I am just reading a volume of sermons which were taken down from the lips of the late excellent Mr. Howell (and which, for their richness and beauty, I would have you all read), with uncommon delight and profit, although he entertained and taught different views, on the coming and kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, to those which, I am sure, the Lord, by his Spirit and by his Word, hath taught me. Moreover I am forward to add, that I receive instruction, and edify by the ministrations of my dear brethren, though they may seldom or very partially enter upon the subject before us; and because, as I have said, all His Word, and every doctrine of it, have their present uses and present application.

I must, however, be allowed to give my opinion, founded on my sincere conviction, that if any man will appear in the Church of God as a Scribe well instructed in righteousness, he must have right views on the coming and kingdom of Jesus; because I believe the same is the key for unlocking the deep and more mysterious things in the Word of the blessed God, and the light by which to shew forth the beauty and harmony of the whole. I will not compare myself with such a man as the one gone to Jesus, whose name you have heard; nor yet with others who now live, except it be to see and feel my own nothingness and unworthiness: but for myself I will say, that I never understood the harmony of Scripture doctrines correctly, until I saw the glorious coming of our glorious King, and the setting up of his kingdom in all the earth.

Again, I am also very anxious to impart an idea or two upon the comprehensiveness of the subject before us, lest any of you should be impatient, and begin to say, "We cannot understand it for want of a fuller development:" and I wish you to see the vast importance and extent of it by the various circumstances and events, which the Word of God presents in connexion; that you may be assured that a single sermon, or many sermons, cannot give more than a general outline, and that therefore you must "read, and mark, and learn, and inwardly digest the Holy Scriptures" for yourselves, in order to become more and more "the children of light" upon it.

And I beseech you to guard against that device which saith, "Clear up all difficulties, and explain every thing to us; and if you cannot, we can believe nothing about it." Why, my dear brethren, this is very like the scoffing of the last days, and is without reason; for it is not possible the finite mind should fully comprehend the infinite on any subject. At best we can know but in part. If then I, or any of God's servants, err in a single point, or come short in others, it is only with this subject as with every other; while our bounden duty on this, as on every other, is, to give ourselves diligently and prayerfully unto the Word. Rev. i. 3, "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand."

Turn then, to learn something of the greatness and comprehensiveness of the subject now in hand, to Jeremiah, xxiii. 5, and take notice, that as other scriptures, in the prophets, reveal the first coming of our Lord Jesus and his priesthood; so this, and many others, reveal his second coming, and his Kingship. "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth." I know what has been said on this verse with regard to his spiritual authority, and I believe and rejoice therein heartily

before God: and I recognize and teach, and ye are my witnesses, that Jesus, the King of saints, has sway in the hearts of his believing people. But tell me, is there nothing besides here? Is that to satisfy us upon this verse? Did he, as a King, in the days of his flesh, or since, reign and prosper in the earth? Did he execute judgment and justice as King in the earth? Was he not the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and looked upon as stricken and afflicted of God? Was not judgment passed upon him, and was not injustice done to him? He is our King, the King of saints, spiritually in the Church; but it is vain to say that his Kingship has been manifested in the world; in other words, this verse has yet to be fulfilled: and, therefore, his coming, you perceive, comprehends his Kingship and kingdom in or over the earth.

Read now verse 6: "In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." Now let facts speak. Was Judah, as Judah, in the days of his flesh, or since, saved? Was Israel, as Israel, made to dwell safely? Were Judah and Israel then, or subsequently (see the end of verse 8) brought to dwell in their own land? Did Judah and Israel as a people call him "The Lord our Righteousness?" Did more, I ask, at any time (see Rom. xi. 5), than a remnant, according to the election of grace, either of the Jews or of the Gentiles, confess him to be, and call him, "The Lord our Righteousness?" If not, the conclusion is obvious, the prophecy is yet to be fulfilled; and thus the coming of our Lord and Master comprehends also the restoration and conversion of Judah and Israel. O, see what a subject!

But some say, "We do not believe a word about the Jews being restored:" and lest there should be any such here, and for the sake of you all, and because there is something very awful in this unbelief, I now set myself to prove it from the word of God.

Ezekiel, xxxvii. Can these dry bones of Judah and Israel live? Can their tribes be found and recognized, and can they all be gathered? Yes; the thing is both possible and certain. The eye of Omniscience can discover them; the arm of Omnipotence can gather them; and his word is pledged, and he will do it. Read verse 15 to the end. Jeremiah also in his thirty-first chapter saith the same things, and the Apostle makes his prophecy of the restoration and blessedness of Judah and Israel, future, by quoting the thirty-first and following verses from this chapter in his Epistle to the Hebrew people, which I now proceed to read. Chap. viii. 8, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord; for this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people; and they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for all shall know me from the least unto the greatest; for I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." Now return to Jeremiah, xxiii. 7: "Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that they shall no more say, The Lord liveth, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt (i.e.

from the first great captivity); but, The Lord liveth which brought up; and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country (*i.e.* a part of them from the second great captivity; for the bulk of the people, or the ten tribes, never returned: and therefore it followeth)—“and from all countries whither I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land;” which is future.

How remarkable that our fathers should have selected this portion from Jeremiah, to be read always on the Sunday preceding the Advent season, as the Epistle! What could they have meant by it but that which we contend for, and which shows the comprehensiveness of our subject, that with the second coming of our Jesus, there is connected the restoration and conversion of the Jews?

On this I have somewhat more to offer. The Lord said to his people, by the mouth of his prophets, “I will scatter you;” and he fulfilled his word; and they are still a scattered people, a standing miracle and monument of the truth of God. This is history; and infidels believe it; it is reduced to sight and fact, and they cannot deny it. But He who said, “I will scatter you,” and did scatter them, also saith, “I will gather you;” “I will bring you out of all countries whither I have driven you, and ye shall dwell in your own land.” This is prophecy, and Christians disbelieve it. I speak this to their shame.

But, my brethren, there is more involved in our epistolic scripture than we have yet suggested. There is not only the bringing of the people into their own land, but there is also involved, necessarily, the building, or increased building of their city and temple. For this expectation, look to the latter chapters of Ezekiel’s prophecy, upon which I unhesitatingly declare I dare not preach unto you, because there are many things I understand not: and I glory in this confession; for who shall fully comprehend the mind of God? yet even things contained therein I doubt not will be made plain, in due time; while for time present, the last verse of the whole prophecy is not only very plain and intelligible, but it crowns every statement I have made about this people with approbation. Ezekiel’s last verse, which follows the description of the city and temple, reads thus: “and the name of the city from” (mark that word, and the time signified, which must be future)—“from that day shall be, *The Lord is there.*”

The next event, which I shall name as connected with our Lord’s second advent (for I say nothing as to order or time), is the judgment of the quick or living, who are found in the nations, see Matthew, xxv. 31, “when the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory.” This, I say, is the judgment of the quick or living only, at his coming: first, because there is no resurrection here; secondly, because he appears as a King, and performs the office of a Shepherd; and thirdly, because the reception of the blessed, and the rejection of the cursed, are only parallels to the reception of Lazarus into Abraham’s bosom, or paradise, and the casting of the ungodly rich one into hell-fire, where he lifted up his eyes in torment and misery. The righteous are received into the kingdom, to inherit it, and the wicked are cast into hell-fire, or outward darkness, where is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, and there reserved with fallen angels, and that ungodly rich one, and all such like, in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.

But though there be no resurrection mentioned here, nor yet, I may also add, any mention of books as regarding the generations of the dead, but only the manifestation of Christ's kingship and the performance of his office of chief shepherd; yet there are other scriptures which declare the resurrection of the Saints who have departed, as taking place also at his coming: and these are many. Let then your minds travel as on the wings of lightning to a few of them, for the king's business, at this moment, requires haste. 1 Cor. xv. 23, "Christ the first-fruits, afterwards they that are Christ's, at his coming." 1 Thess. iv. 16, "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of God; *and the dead in Christ shall rise first.* Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words." Upon which resurrection, now see Rev. xx. The holy spirit of Jesus pronounces his sweet benediction. Verse 6. "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years." Look also at the 5th verse "But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished."

Now, hear me. Christ comes, the saints rise from their graves, or are changed, to meet him; the wicked are cast out of his kingdom and the Jews are restored; when the reign of Christ and his saints commences in the morning of that day which Peter says is as a thousand years, and as it is written (Psalm xlix. 14,) "The upright shall have dominion in the morning;" and in the evening of that day Christ ascends the great white throne and the resurrection and judgment of the wicked follow. Rev. xx. 12, "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God: and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works."

I have introduced this part for the sake of making the other more plain, and both distinct; for who does not see that we have gone just one thousand years beyond the coming (taking that space of time from Scripture as our guide), while, in shewing the comprehensiveness of our subject, the other events as connected with the coming, were alone required. By so doing, however, I have shewn what I think may be fairly understood by our collects and creeds, according to 2 Tim. iv. 1, that our Lord Jesus Christ shall judge both the quick and the dead, at his appearing, and his kingdom.

Nor ought this view to be considered novel by those who read, and mark, and learn, and inwardly digest the holy Scriptures (but alas! I fear it is true that a London people run here and there, to hear this or that man, and neglect their Bibles); for if you consult, at your leisure, the contents at the head of the twentieth chapter of Revelations, and the marginal references at the side of it, in your common or old Bibles, you will find, that the man or men who made them, clearly saw the distinctions which have been drawn, for they stand printed in accordance therewith.

My text will, I trust, be thus rendered of easy interpretation. I have departed, on this occasion, from my usual plan of illustrating my text, that I might the better prepare your minds, by the force of Scripture evidence, for the very simple and brief view which I now design to give of it; nay, that

view is already presented, and it only remaineth that it be reiterated, by few words, in the form the text prescribeth.

First : Our Lord says, " A certain nobleman " (taking the title which might be allowed, because although truly the King of the Jews, they allowed it not), " went into a far country." The words in Matthew and Mark are more expressively direct : " as a man travelling into a far country ; " " the Son of Man taking a long journey ; " shewing that the application was to himself, as saying, " I go away."

Secondly : This nobleman receives for himself a kingdom, and is our Jesus ; our Jesus " exalted, a Prince and a Saviour," in " the glory which he had with the Father before the world was." O, how clearly we here learn of his Deity ! and that all authority, and dominion, and power are vested and centre in Him ; that as God the Son, He dwells in light which no man can approach unto, which no man hath seen nor can see, to whom be glory for ever and ever, amen : that angels, and principalities, and powers in the heavenly places are subject unto Him : and that through the dispensation of the Spirit He reigns in the hearts of his people.

But besides, and after this, a kingdom is to be revealed ; for it is added, thirdly, and to return, here special attention is needed, and, first, the context will throw some light upon the meaning. At verse 11 it is said, " He spake this parable, because he was nigh unto Jerusalem, and because they thought the kingdom of God should immediately appear." And what does the parable state ? Not that they erred with regard to the nature of the kingdom, nor yet as to the place of its appearing ; but with regard to the time ! It says, no, not immediately, for the Son of man must go, and first receive his kingdom, and then return. With this also accords another Scripture which, as it is generally supposed to make against the view now taken, I the more anxiously bring it forward. John, xviii. 33, " Pilate said unto Jesus" (at his bar), " Art thou the King of the Jews ?" Verse 36, Jesus answered, " My kingdom is not of this world : if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered unto the Jews : *but now is my kingdom not from hence.*" What kingdom ? Did he mean the kingdom which " is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost ?" Impossioble ; for that kingdom was from thence ; and is now ; and blessed be God, many of us know, by the tokens of his love in our repentance, and faith, and sense of forgiveness and acceptance, that we are the subjects of that kingdom. What kingdom was it then of which he says, " not from hence ?" I answer, the kingdom which is to appear at his second coming, and is to be universal " under the whole heavens ; " the kingdom to be established when he shall come with all his holy angels and ten thousand of his saints ; of which He himself spake more directly to the high priest, than to Pilate, saying, " Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."

But can you doubt ? I will not judge you, but rather believe the testimony so abundant as to remove every doubt, and to assure you that the kingdom will come in due time, and that our Jesus will show in his time, who is that blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who having been a light to enlighten the Gentiles, returns to be the glory of his people Israel, when, " The God of the whole earth, shall he be called."

Wherefore, let us attend to the commandments he gave to his disciples, on leaving this world for a season. Verse 13, "He called his ten servants, and delivered unto them ten pounds"—a definite number put for an indefinite, both as regards the servants and the pounds, or talents, delivered to them; and we are to understand this as generally applicable to the Church to the end of the dispensation, because these words follow: "Occupy till I come."

This charge I give, first of all, unto *my own soul*, in the presence of you all, and in His sight; for he has certainly committed unto me, at least, *one* pound, which, by his grace, I must employ better than heretofore, in warning, and rebuking, and exhorting, and inviting all of you, to give all diligence to make your calling and election sure, if so be that I may but present every one of you perfect in Christ Jesus at his coming. And, my brethren, conscious of inefficient labours, and weakness, and infirmities, and sins, I ask your forgiveness for the past, and prayers for the future. O pray, cry mightily unto God for your minister, that the Spirit may be given him whereby to crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts, to teach you by example as well as by doctrine; lest after having preached to others, he himself should be a castaway. I speak not this of fear, but because I desire to reap a full reward!

Secondly, I say *to you also*, speaking in the person of Christ, "Occupy till I come." Set Christ always before you as your object, in all the glories of his cross, and in all the coming glories of his kingdom. Let the business of the day be done in the day, and that which every day requireth.

Your *closet* duty. On no account neglect the Word of God and prayer for you own souls in private. Seek, O seek communion with Christ in secret, and be assured at his coming he will reward you openly.

Your *domestic* duty. Occupy your station, O bless your households! Parents and rulers attend to this; children and servants be thankful for it. Let all be consecrated to God by the sprinkling of the blood of the covenant at morning and evening sacrifice. O see ye to it: follow Job's example, let it be done continually.

And your *church* duties. Occupy the sanctuary "till I come." Brethren, we were falling into sad negligence; and though I bless God for some improvement, there is yet room for much more; wherefore, while I would on no account have any exceed their strength or health (for we are to have respect unto the body as well as the soul), yet, I beseech you, beware lest you fall into making vain and worldly excuses for neglecting the Lord's house; for if such be your case, he will surely requite it at his coming. I pray you rouse up yourselves, and call your best energies into vigorous exercise. Watch, pray, and worship, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.

Lastly. Occupy in the sanctuary: "Show ye forth the Lord's death till he come." All ye that truly confess your sins, and seek pardon and peace in Jesus, shew your faith in his death at the supper, the feast of the Lord, this day! And here, let me ask, how is it that so many of you turn away, or partake with the faithful so seldom? Ah! my brethren, it is because the world makes such encroachments upon your time, and is allowed to occupy your minds, and engage your hearts. And O it breaks my heart! it is because I have served you so badly; have been cold and unfruitful as well as you; and have deep need, if I condemn you, to condemn myself much more, because we have not occupied or served as believers in the Lord's coming ought.

But, dear brethren, since we have cause to weep together, let us remember we have cause to rejoice. Our glorious King is gracious, and yet speaks peace. Our very convictions, as well as all other graces, are tokens of his love, for he gives repentance and pardons sin. Come then, as many of you as seek Jesus, as many as cry for pardon and grace, and desire salvation and glory! Show forth his death until he come. As always, so now, I testify that the efficacy of the cross, the merits of his death, are, and will be, deeply needed for every one of you up to the moment of the crown being bestowed.

Trust in him, then, and occupy to the end, that when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, ye also may appear with him in glory.

## THE IMPORTUNATE WIDOW A TYPE OF GOD'S ELECT PEOPLE

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REV. J. STRATTEN,

PADDINGTON CHAPEL, DECEMBER 13, 1835.

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' And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?"—LUKE, xviii. 7, 8.

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SOME of our Lord's parables are analogical, founded upon the simple principle of a narrative and story. This is the case with the parable of the prodigal son. The prodigal son represents the Gentiles going far away from God: the elder brother is the Jew, abiding in the divine house and family, and favoured with all the privileges belonging to that state. And when the key is given, we trace the resemblance in its various points. So also with the parable of the sower and the seed: when Christ represents himself as the sower, and the world as the field, every thing is clear and easy to the mind. So also in the parable of the tares and the wheat: the instant the interpretation is given, it is all plain, and obvious, and indisputable.

Some of the parables of Christ are constructed upon a two-fold principle—on analogy in some points, and contrast in others. In the parable of the unjust steward, his dishonesty and his infidelity to his trust are evidently to be discountenanced and condemned: nothing is to be commended but his sagacity, his prudence, his foresight. So in the parable which is now before us, there are some points in which the analogy is clear and palpable. The widow who is desolate and afflicted, crying for succour and for justice, beautifully represents the church of Christ amid the afflictions of the world and the oppressions of the wicked. Her importunity also, is the type and figure of the earnestness and the occasional vehemence with which God's people, so to speak, besiege the footstool of his mercy and the throne of his grace: and then, the succour in both instances opens before our minds in all its strength, and sweetness, and consolation.

But then, on the other hand, the widow sustained no relation to the judge: but the people, whom the widow, and the type, and parable represent, do sustain intimate, close, ineffable relation to God; they are represented as "his own elect." The judge is declared to be "unjust;" one might call him cruel and ferocious, for he "neither feared God, nor regarded man;" but God is infinitely just; God is gloriously kind and transcendently good; God is ever as disposed to show mercy, as to do justice, for those who come and claim it at his hands. The "importunity" of the widow is the *trouble* of the judge; she is an annoyance at his door; she is a torment in his ears; and simply to get rid of

his personal annoyance, he interposes to do her justice. The prayers of God's people are *delightful* to his ears; it is the incense which goeth up in fragrancy from this world to heaven; it is the acknowledgment of God's power and supremacy in this small province of his great empire.

So the parable, a passage of which I have selected for the text, is constructed on the principle of contrast; and it comes on us in all the power of that opposition. If the unjust judge do justice for the importunate widow, how much more shall the merciful, the righteous, and the holy God, ultimately—though there may seem to be long delay—hear the prayers of his people, and bring to pass that triumph of truth and righteousness over darkness and error and superstition, which his Church earnestly desires, and most importunately prays for.

In the passage there are many topics: I shall only glance briefly at a few of them, taking those that lie on the surface of the passage.

First: GOD HAS AN ELECT PEOPLE IN THE WORLD, scattered up and down among men found in various places, and in almost all communities, as his chosen ones. Respecting this doctrine, I simply read out the sayings of the Scriptures. "Whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified." The various links of this great chain of salvation are incontestibly plain up to the mercy, the electing love of God in all eternity. "He saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy; I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." "So then, it is not of him that willeth, nor him that runneth, but God that showeth mercy." I could not invent language more strong or more decisive to affirm the sovereignty of God, his affirmation of his right, and his determination to do what he will with his own. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved." In another place we read, "Elect according to the fore-knowledge of God, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." And so we are told of "the Lamb's book of life, written before the foundation of the world."

There can be no question, therefore, as to this principle among those who receive the Bible as an inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and as a revelation made from God to men: the only question that can arise is, in what sense the terms are to be understood. There are some who contend for an election which is personal, absolute, and unconditional; and others who contend for an election which is national, regarding churches, communities, and people in the mass. I should decidedly adopt that principle, and go into that theory, if it did appear to me to remove any difficulties, or in any way to interpret, or to shed new light on the great question. And I inquire, whether it be not the self-same principle which is involved, whether we admit the election to be of the individual or the community? Is it not the self-same doctrine (it seems to be so to me) when I say of that man that he is taken, and of his neighbour that he is left; when

I say that God chooses people whom he constituted into churches in Judea, but the people in Persia were left; that he chose people whom he constituted into churches in Asia Minor, when the people in Arabia were left; that he had churches in Macedon and Greece, when in Iceland and the regions of the north there were none; that he has churches in England, when in China he has none—that England is taken, and China is left? I simply inquire whether this election does not involve the same principle, as when I say of this man that he is taken, and of that man that he is left, only that this view of it, regarding it as the election of nations, takes it in a wider sweep and on a vaster scale: the one view receives the doctrine as it respects individuals, the other as it respects myriads. If I quarrelled with the doctrine at all I should quarrel with it on the large scale, rather than on the individual and personal application of it. But I quarrel not with it at all: I simply say, May not God do what he will with his own? and shall not the God of all the earth do right? And though I can say I never go out of my way to meet this doctrine, yet, when it comes fairly and fully before me, I never go out of my way to escape or to evade it: but I desire to look into the countenance of this truth; and I see it to be a countenance of beauty, to be a face of love, bearing an aspect most benign, gentle, and gracious. God's choosing mercy, God's electing love, is ever represented in the Scriptures as having the most favourable and complacent influence upon his universal church.

I wish to observe that this doctrine is illustrated and corroborated by facts. God took Abraham: might he not at the same period, and in the then existing condition of the world, have taken any one besides him? As Jeremy Taylor (who was no friend to this sentiment) beautifully expresses it—"There was an elect in the midst of the election:" for it is said, "Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, in Isaac shall thy seed be called; that is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sara shall have a son. And not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac (for the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth), it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger." We see God choosing Moses to a work and office—Joshua to a work and office—David to a crown—Paul the apostle to the apostleship. Does God choose men to honour in his church below, or to dignity on the earth, and may he not choose whom he will upon whom to confer the throne and the coronet, the dignity and the honour, which are imperishable in a world which shall never fade away? We believe that he might, and we hold with the sentiment in the text, "Shall not God avenge his own elect, who cry day and night unto him?"

Men may take this principle in a light which does not belong to it, and affirm that they can deduce conclusions from it which in the Bible are directly and distinctly denied. With all such perversions and abuses of the principle we have nothing to do; and all I intend on this occasion is, to present it before your minds as I find it in this Book, in its own unshadowed and inextinguishable splendour.

There are, I might observe, two things which always make it appear to me,

not only in a light that is harmless, but in a light that is most beneficial. The one is, that *it is never separated from its moral influences*. "Predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son." "Chosen that we may be blameless and harmless, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation." And here, in the passage before us, it stands allied with a devotional character and with a praying habit of mind: and we are sure of this, that, practically felt in the mind, it does humble, prostrate, purify, inspire, and awaken within the lowest gratitude, and, at the same time, the loftiest and the holiest joy.

The other thing that I would wish to remark respecting it is, that *it interferes not in any degree with the universal invitations of the Gospel*; with the calling on all men to repent and believe; with the spreading of the great festival, and going out into the highways and the hedges, according to the commandment, to compel men to come in. It does not restrict us in saying "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters:" and in any view that any man takes of this principle, if it prevents him from inviting all men to come to Christ, assuring them that as they come they shall inevitably receive salvation, that man does not take it in the aspect which the Scriptures present i to him.

I shall only mention a passage in the epistle of Peter, and then I have done with this doctrine: "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:" chosen that we may reflect the lustre of the moral perfections of Deity; chosen that we may be adorned and beautified in holiness; chosen that we may arise and shine in pre-eminence, holiness, and joy, God's own elect.

Secondly, THE ELECT OF GOD ARE DISTINGUISHED BY THEIR DEVOTIONAL CHARACTER—THEIR PRAYING FRAME OF MIND. "Shall not God avenge his own elect who cry day and night before him?" The evidence that we are chosen of God, called into his church, made partakers of his mercy, is in this, that we recognize his providence; that we live in daily dependence upon his bounty; that we lift up our hearts to him in supplication; that believing we pray, and that praying we confide. Now this is the state of mind directly in contrast to that which obtains among men. You see them living regardless of God, forgetful of, if they do not deny, his providence; in no way recognizing his agency or intervention. They do not go into their closets; they do not bow their knee in secret: they do not ejaculate as they walk in the streets, and are engaged in the ordinary occupations and affairs: they are not men of prayer; devotion is not the element in which they live, and move, and have their being. But we say, that just in proportion in which a man's election of God is made manifest to his mind, in that same proportion is he a praying and a godly man: so that the person who is chosen of God leads continually a life of piety; it is his habit to depend on God's providence, his ever watchful care.

In illustration of this, look at those who have been signally and conspicuously chosen. There is Abraham: with what importunity did he intercede for Sodom; how much more would he be found in the daily practice of interceding for himself, and praying for his own family and household. Look at Moses: all day long upon the hill when Israel was warring with Amalek, he stood with

uplifted hands till the power of his arms failed; and even then were they upheld by the assistance of Aaron and Hur: he was evidently a praying man. Look at David: it pleased God to enable him to prepare and set forth devotional exercises, aids, and assistances for his church throughout all generations to the end of time. Daniel kneeled on his knees and prayed to God, we are told, three times a day. Peter went up to the house-top at the hour of prayer, that he might intercede with God. And Paul says, "For this cause I bow my knee unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family of heaven and earth is named." I have marked these as being originally and conspicuously elect ones of God, and in their devotional character of mind standing out as types and representations of God's universal family: they are emblems and pictures (if I may use the expression) by which we may judge of the whole body, the vast and multitudinous concourse to which they belong. So that God's elect ones have ever been a praying family, and distinguished indubitably for their devotional habit of mind.

This is according to our Gospel. God is ever present, and his ear ever open to our cry. We are not like the worshippers of Baal: our Deity is never asleep, never idle, never on a journey, never dull of hearing, never incompetent, or in a state of incapacity to attend; he is present to bestow on us all things for which we call upon him. Then we have a Mediator, Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant: we have a high-priest who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. And there is another great reason why we come boldly to the throne of God—because it is a throne of grace; and there we obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. There is vouchsafed also to every chosen person, to every one of the elect of God whose election is made manifest, the Spirit of adoption, whereby he cries "Abba, Father," ruling in his mind, filling his heart, replenishing and occupying his nature. Thus God is ready to hear him, and the Saviour intercedes for him, and the Holy Spirit helps him; and in the enjoyment of his privileges, and in the exercise of his great prerogative, to his heavenly Father he prays.

It is also according to the commandment: "Thou when thou prayest enter into thy closet;" "Praying always with all prayer and supplication;" "Pray without ceasing"—in our retirement, in our families, in the house of God. And there are special times in which every good man "gives himself;" as the expression is in the Psalms, unto prayer: there are times when we have to deprecate divine anger; there are periods when we have to implore special communications for the fulness of the Holy Spirit. As soon as Paul was converted it was said of him, "Behold, he prayeth;" it was made manifest that he was a chosen vessel; and God said of him, "He is a chosen vessel—behold, he prayeth." Ever connect the one sentiment as you find it with the other.

Let me put the question pointedly to you. Are *you* in the habit of praying? Let me give a practical turn to the representation which is made in this parable. Do you pray? Do you come to the house of God with a praying heart? You sing hymns: have you a praying heart? You hear the Bible read: have you a praying heart? I press my question home: because if you have not the praying heart; if your conscience does not bear you witness in the Holy Ghost, that day and night, in the morning when you rise up, and in the evening when you lie down, when you walk by the way, and when you are sitting in the

house—if your conscience does not bear witness that you carry about with you the devotional mind, the praying heart, with all the elements of thanksgiving, supplication, and praise ever pervading you, what evidence have you that you have part or lot in this great and glorious matter?

Then I would add, that an elect and praying people are beautiful in the eyes of God, and his ears are ever open to their cry. If they are in secret he is there: if they are congregated together, as multitudes are on this great day, he is present in their assemblies. He knows every praying heart in this congregation: and wherever his people are met together this night, at this blessed season, for the same solemn purpose, there he is present. God, who shines and sheds his glory in all the chapels of the heavenly world where angels and seraphs sing—God, who beholds them in the brightness of their numbers, and in the sublimity of their songs, is present in his churches upon earth: and I venture to affirm, that the sight of an angel in his innocence, and the melody of an angel in his loftiest, loveliest form, are not more agreeable to the divine eye, to the divine ear, to the divine mind, than the supplications, prayers, and thanksgivings of his elect people, his chosen church, his ransomed ones, presented to him and made fragrant by the intercession and mediation of his Son.

Thirdly, their prayers particularly regard THE RETRIBUTION UPON THE ENEMY, AND THE COMING OF THE KINGDOM. “ Shall not God avenge his own elect, who cry day and night unto him?” There is emphasis on the word *cry*. Abel's blood did cry; there was a shrill, piercing, importunate voice in it. Just before God came down to deliver the Israelites in Egypt, on account of their bondage and oppression, it is said they did “ sigh and cry:” and we find the church, when distressed and in anguish by reason of the enemy, is said to “ cry.” A widow, a desolate person, sustaining injury, bleeding under injustice, cries, and asks the judge for justice: and precisely in the same way the church is said to cry to God for justice. And against whom? The answer is, Against Satan, the great adversary, who has established a tyranny and an usurpation in this world, who has built up his kingdom amidst darkness, and violence, and blood. Every where we behold around us the emblems and insignia of him who is called “ the god of this world.” And we ask for justice upon him, and pray God to bruise him under our feet, and to do it quickly. The Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil; and we call on the Son of God in the exercise of his supremacy to do his work:

“ Almighty God cut short his power;  
Let him in darkness dwell;  
And that he vex the world no more,  
Come, bind him down to hell.”

Justice we may ask also on the instruments and agents employed by him. That I overstep not the boundaries of Scripture in this matter, let me quote the language of Scripture. “ Remember, O Lord, the children of Edom:” in the day of retribution remember, and let justice be done unto him: “ Remember O Lord, the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem; who said, Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof. O daughter of Babylon who art to be destroyed; happy shall he be, that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us. Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones.” (You may interpret it as you will) Say not, That is the Old Testament—I will

give a passage from the New; and the New represents beings, not upon earth, but in heaven: "And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the Word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" They call for justice, they ask for retribution. "And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled:" until the papacy had done her dreadful work of massacre and bloodshed also; and then. So I understand the passage.

Nor do I understand this view of the case at all to interfere with the clement, humane, merciful, forgiving temper of Christ and of his holy Gospel. "I say unto you, Love your enemies," is the command of Him who, expiring on the cross, prayed for his murderers: and Stephen, his first martyr, when he died, said, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." In these great matters there is no personal animosity, no desire to do our own individual enemies an injury or a mischief. Evil principle, error, delusion, superstition, are intended; every thing that impedes the welfare or happiness of man; every thing that obstructs the knowledge of Christ, and the advancement of the glory of God our Saviour. These are the things which we wish to be out of the way; and on the upholders of these, in that character and capacity only, do we demand justice, and beseech the intervention of heaven. I suppose this to explain what we so frequently meet with in the book of Psalms: when David prays, as he does indubitably, against his enemies, they are not to be considered as his personally, but as enemies of the truth, as adversaries to God, as antagonists to the Almighty, as in dark and guilty confederation against that religion of which he was appointed of God to be the supporter and the defender.

Not only this, but *the coming of the kingdom* is implied; the diffusion of that cause which shall bring every blessing with it; concerning which, when the promise respecting it is realized, it is affirmed that "the wilderness shall rejoice and blossom as the rose." O blessed time! "Blossom like the rose!"—beautiful, fragrant, lovely, sweet, heavenly! The very wilderness shall "blossom like the rose!" O God, put an end to all evil principles. Overturn, overturn, overturn: destroy, annihilate whatever stands in the way of that great, that most holy and blessed consummation!

Then look at the prayers of the church, and you will find them to be perfectly coincident with what I have been saying. What is the fifteenth of Exodus—the first inspired and recorded hymn of praise and prayer in the Bible? What is the fifth of the Judges—the second Psalm, the forty-fifth, the sixty-seventh, the seventy-second, from the ninety-sixth to the ninety-eighth—what the spirit of the concluding psalms in the inspired book? And when the prophets pray, how is it? "Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord." "I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give him no rest till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth"—till he do his work of mercy upon his people, and justice upon their enemies.

What are the leading topics, what the chief points, what constitutes the

spirit of the great model of devotion given us by Christ himself? How does it begin? "Our Father, who art in heaven—thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." What becomes of the devil, then, and all his partisans? What becomes of error and antichristianism in all its foul and monstrous shapes? How does the prayer terminate? "Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever." I think, from that model and example given to us by our Lord, that we ought to pray much more than we do, not only for personal benediction, and individual happiness, but for the triumphs of religion, that Christ would take to himself his great power and glory.

And now I come to observe fourthly, and but for a moment, that THE PRAYER OF THE ELECT CHURCH FOR JUSTICE SHALL BE HEARD AND ANSWERED WHEN THE LORD COMETH. I am not sure that the word "avenge" here is the right one: if the widow had asked vengeance on her enemy, peradventure the judge would not have granted it; but it means more properly *justice*. "Though he bear long with them," says the text. A very learned critic, on the authority of many ancient manuscripts, observes it ought to be "though he compassionate them:" that is, while they cry, though God appeareth not to attend to them, yet he does hear them, and tenderly compassionates them.

If we take it as being correctly "avenge," I beg to remark that the world and the wicked have had their time of vengeance. Here is a picture! "All that pass by clap their hands at thee; they hiss and wag their head at the daughter of Jerusalem." With ferocious face they clapped their hands, and hissed, and wagged their heads, "saying, Is this the city that men call the perfection of beauty, the joy of the whole earth? All thine enemies have opened their mouth against thee: they hiss and gnash the teeth: they say, we have swallowed her up: certainly this is the day that we looked for; we have found, we have seen it." Unholy vengeance! Revenge, in the true and strict sense of the expression, awful to contemplate! That was *man's* day; that was the day of the adversary: and God stood silent by. But God has *his* day: the day of the Lord cometh: and this is referred to in the text. If I had time I could quote expressions just coincident from Deuteronomy, Isaiah, and Jeremiah. I will only read one in Jeremiah: "The voice of them that flee and escape out of the land of Babylon, to declare in Zion the vengeance of the Lord our God, the vengeance of his temple." Now the overthrow of Babylon is ever represented as a retribution on her for the cruelties she inflicted in Jerusalem: and it is exceedingly observable it was just at the moment when Belshazzar and his nobles were feasting from the goblets and golden basins taken from the temple of Zion; just at that moment (nothing under heaven being more improbable or impossible) Cyrus was in the city, Babylon was captured, Belshazzar's days were ended; and our Lord foretelling what should happen to Jerusalem—Jerusalem having rejected and put him to death, stoned Stephen, and murdered James—our Lord said, predicting what should be, "These be your days of vengeance." Did you ever read carefully and with prayer, Revelations xviii? "Reward her"—be she whom she may—"Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her according to her works." "Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her." I could go on if there were time and

space. Be careful when the word "vengeance" occurs from the lips of God, to remember it means pure justice, the manifestation of transcendental rectitude, consummate holiness, abstracted from all the vehemence and frenzy and violence which you see in human passion when men are actuated by revenge.

We come to the last thing: when the Lord shall come to execute his justice FAITH WILL BE AT A LOW EBB ON THE EARTH. "Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh shall he find faith on the earth?" when he cometh to execute justice. It is very observable that in almost every great and signal instance in which God has remarkably come for a purpose specified in the passage, it has been suddenly, in a moment, and when there is no belief of it. It was so in the days of Noah: nothing could equal their mockery, contempt, and scorn. It was so in the destruction of Sodom: on as fair a morning as ever shone from heaven, suddenly a tempest of lightning and brimstone and fire did descend. It was so in the deliverance from Egypt: the Israelites were in the deepest distress and dismay; and "at midnight," it is said, respecting the justice on Pharaoh and his people, "at midnight," suddenly there was a cry heard in every dwelling that the first-born was dead.

I might go on to show that when the deliverance from the bondage of Babylon was about to transpire, neither enemies nor friends of Zion had the slenderest anticipation of it. They were just beginning, on the one part, to be disheartened, supposing that the time had expired, and the deliverance had not come; and on the other side to ask scornfully, "Where is the promise of his coming?"

And when Christ came, though he was in the world, and the world that was made by him, yet the world rejected him. And when he came in judgment on Jerusalem, his sign was in heaven, his providential appearances were abroad; but they did not know it, and many even in these days do not understand that there was a coming in those days of vengeance: but so it was; and the Jews upon whom the vengeance came did not believe; there was no faith in their hearts.

I might come on to later times. Christ came undoubtedly in the great days of reformation. His truth and his Spirit were every where all abroad; and nothing could equal the darkness, and guilty revelry of those, who, calling themselves by his name, had outraged every principle of his holiness. At the time when the great change took place in our own land by the ministrations of Wesley and Whitfield, how dark was our country antecedent to that bright rising of the truth! And how are things now? If Christ should come now—I mean in splendid manifestation of his power and grace, in wonderful effusion of his Spirit, causing his truth to triumph and his kingdom to spread—I wonder how much faith there would be; I wonder how much faith there would be in this metropolis (as I may fairly call it) of the Christian world; how many believers in comparison with those who are asleep and believe not; and among those believers, what proportion of feeble-minded, faint-hearted, half believers. Whether things will grow dimmer and dimmer I do not know, I undertake not to say; possibly it may be so before the introduction of the great glories of the millennial day, inasmuch as it seems uniformly to have been the case, that prior to any great advent of the Son of God there has been a decay of doctrine, iniquity has abounded, and the love of many has waxed cold. Even the

millennial day will have its sun-set: will it not? What mean Gog and Magog? What means the scornful language adverted to by the apostle Peter? What means Jude when he talks of the "hard speeches" which ungodly men do utter? "When the Son of man shall come, will he find faith on the earth?"

Let me bring the subject to a practical end. It all goes to show the importance and the necessity of continual and persevering prayer. Therefore whatever things may seem to you mysterious, forget not to pray. One of my earliest and most venerated friends in the ministry, the last time I called on him, had the Bible opened before him at the epistle of Peter; and he said to me, "This is right—this is right." And as I left the room he said, "Pray; pray; pray: be a man of prayer:" and I never heard his voice any more; and shall see him no more till I see him in glory. Men ought always to pray, and not to faint. May our loins be girt; and let the Lord come when he will how he may, in personal advent or by manifestation of his Spirit, may we be found with our loins girt, and our lamps burning.

I only add, "Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

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